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Introduction: An Analysis of Particular Characteristics in the Sport Governance Systems of the U.S. and EU Sports Model

Slightly under 2% of the area of its former colonial power, France, Lebanon succeeds in fitting a great deal into its small boundaries. The nation's diverse capital, Beirut, formerly referred to as the Paris of the Middle East, has consistently drawn tourists to its vibrant spirit (Doyle, 2017). Despite a human history that stretches back thousands of years, Lebanon provides the traveler with far more than just these indulgent activities. Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Ottomans, and French have all competed for control of this small eastern Mediterranean territory, leaving their archaeological and cultural marks throughout the nation. Lebanon's top attractions, such as Aanjar, Baalbek, Byblos, the Qadisha Valley, and Tyre, have all been designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Doyle, 2017). Situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the Syrian steppe, the region known as Lebanon in ancient times included Mount Lebanon along the Phoenician coastline and the parallel Anti-Lebanon mountain range, extending southward to Mount Hermon. The mountains encircling the lush Bekaa Valley are the tallest in the Near East. Reaching a height of 3,083 m above sea level and stretching approximately 220 km from north to south and 80 km from west to east, they resemble an authentic water tower. Four principal rivers of Syria originate in this region: The Orontes and Litani in the Bekaa Valley, the Barada on the eastern slopes of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, and the Jordan to the south of Mount Hermon. Numerous smaller waterways also facilitated the early development of agriculture in elevated regions. Lebanon did not witness the emergence of any significant towns during the Hellenistic and Roman eras,

except for Arca, Heliopolis (Baalbek), and Caesarea Paneas. The nation was predominantly home to farmers and herders residing on the outskirts of the highly developed cities of Phoenicia and Damascus. Its past has often been simplified to the narrative of disruptions caused by certain individuals when Rome started to assert its power over the East. Recent developments in archaeological and historical studies now provide a more nuanced perspective on these circumstances. They also offer fresh insights into the groups that developed the temples that established Lebanon's reputation during Roman dominance (Aliquot, 2021).

Nonetheless, in contrast to other colonial endeavors, Western impact marked the region long prior to the period of Western colonialism or imperialism in the Levant (Barhouche, 2024). The region known as Lebanon was included in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century AD until the conclusion of World War I. On October 30, 1918, the Ottoman Empire and the Triple Entente agreed to the Armistice of Moudros, bringing an end to Ottoman activities in active combat zones (Klimeš, 2013). The Ottoman Empire allowed ethno-religious communities a degree of autonomy in their religious and communal matters (Hakim, 2013; Masters, 2004). While this notion has some validity in practice, Sunni Muslims were given preferential treatment, whereas other groups were regarded as second- and third-class citizens (Hakim, 2013; Masters, 2004). Progressing into the 1800s, the Ottomans started enacting the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) to modernize the empire and guarantee equitable treatment for all its subjects (Hakim, 2013). Nevertheless, in reality, certain inequalities remained, resulting in excessive taxation in Mount Lebanon and triggering the Maronite peasant uprising of 1859–1860 against their Christian and Druze feudal lords (Hakim, 2013). The uprising intensified into a sectarian conflict when the Druze feudal lords equipped their Druze farmers, leading to a loss for the Maronite farmers and the slaughter and devastation of Christian villages, which were backed by the Ottomans (Hakim, 2013). Later, the

French intervened and facilitated the creation of a semi-autonomous Mount Lebanon Governorate led by a non-local Ottoman Christian governor, with guidance from representatives of the six major sectarian groups (Hakim, 2013). Even in 1915, as World War I was beginning, Britain and France were discussing the future of the Ottoman Empire, which had allied with Germany in the war. These conversations would culminate in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which formed the foundation of the contemporary Middle East. The parties agreed that France would directly govern the Lebanese coastline and that the British would take charge of southern Iraq; concurrently, Britain acknowledged the Syrian interior as a French sphere of influence, and in exchange, France accepted British authority over the Baghdad region. The discussions also concluded that Palestine would be internationalized and segmented into different zones of influence (Balanche, 2016).

On November 10, 1919, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, in correspondence with Maronite Patriarch Elias Peter Hoayek, consented to provide Lebanon with self-governance and independent national recognition (Balanche, 2016). The French Mandate officially concluded on November 22, 1943, yet it took an additional three years for French forces to exit Lebanese territory (Volk, 2008). In 1943, the newly established Lebanese constitution assigned thirty parliamentary seats to Christians in Lebanon and twenty-five to Muslims, a distribution that overlooked changing demographics. Via an agreement known as the National Pact, which serves as Lebanon's foundational political charter, Christian Bechara El Khoury, leader of the al-Dustour Party, was appointed president, while Sunni Muslim Riad al-Solh took on the role of prime minister (Balanche, 2016).

In the mainly Muslim nations of the Arab world, Lebanon is distinctly recognized as a particularly diverse country. Consequently, Lewis (1995) stated that Lebanon has acted as 'the sole enduring hub of cultural and religious diversity, along with economic and political liberty in the

Arab world' originating from the Ottoman Empire. This variety has led to regular turmoil in the nation, highlighted by the fifteen-year civil conflict that began in 1975, along with ongoing intermittent violence. In a vivid illustration of the contentious nature of information in this divided Lebanon, different authors have variously referred to the civil war as concluding in 1989 (Frayha, 2003), 1990 (Abouchedid, Nasser, & Blommestein, 2002; Terc, 2006), and 1991 (Volk, 2008). The nation was fragmented internally by sectarian armed groups, triggering significant diplomatic and military involvement from regional nations and world powers, such as the United Nations. Following the civil war, it was essential to restore the nation's ruined infrastructure and modify it for the globalization of trade and finance. As suggested by the Taif Agreement, emphasis should be placed on military and police agencies, which were normatively established as the 'central pillar' of the new government. Between 1990 and 2005, the rebuilding of the security sector was significantly hindered and alarmingly unbalanced, contrasting with the positive official narrative and assured public sentiment. The revamped Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) continued to struggle with asserting state authority across the national territory and creating a unified citizenship as anticipated following the introduction of general conscription. Three contextual factors contribute to this failure: (a) the persistent segmentation of Lebanese society along primordial (family, clan, and sect) lines; (b) the gradual infiltration of Syrian Ba'thist political culture into Lebanon's political landscape during almost thirty years (1976–2005) of military occupation and authoritarian governance; and (c) Lebanon's security remained at risk due to regional and international conflicts linked to the Arab-Israeli dispute (Picard, 2012).

The year 2005 marked a significant moment in post-civil war Lebanon's history, highlighted by the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February, shortly after he advo-

cated for the acceptance of UNSC Resolution 1559. The three contextual elements mentioned earlier were disrupted, leading to a new array of challenges: (a) the restructuring of the national landscape divided the political field into two coalitions based on pro-Western (14 March) and pro-Syria and pro-Iran (8 March) positions. This ideological split intensified Lebanon's confessional fragmentation, particularly between Sunnis and Shi'a, as Christians divided into two opposing factions (Picard, 2012).

On July 12, 2006, Israel launched an extensive military campaign against Lebanon that continued until August 14, 2006, allegedly prompted by a cross-border attack by Hezbollah that resulted in the capture of two Israeli soldiers shortly prior to the Israeli offensive. UN Security Resolution 1701, issued on August 11, 2006, called for a ceasefire (which was not observed until days later) and for a significant increase in UN peacekeeping troops in South Lebanon. Although the immediate result of the Israeli conflict was its inability to fulfill the objectives stated by Israel, it succeeded in deepening the existing political rifts regarding particular national matters and drawing external interventions further into the nation's affairs (Makdisi et al., 2010).

When the Shi'a ministers left the cabinet on November 11, 2006, the nation descended into even more political unrest, with progovernment parties such as the al-Mustaqbal (Future) Movement (Sunni), the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze), the Lebanese Forces (Maronite), and their allies facing off against opposition parties such as Hezbollah and Amal (both Shi'a) and the Free Patriotic Movement (primarily Maronite), along with allies from various religious groups. The government crisis caused by the Shi'a ministers' resignation raged on, with massive protests and counter-demonstrations held as a show of support. When the president's term in office concluded on November 22, 2007, no agreement was reached regarding the election of a new president, leaving the position vacant for the first time since independence (Makdisi et al., 2010).

Various initiatives by the Arab League and non-Arab actors to mediate between opposition and loyalist factions over the presidential election and the formation of a national unity government remained unsuccessful until mid–May 2008, when Lebanon teetered on the brink of another civil war. On May 15, 2008, a renewed mediation effort by the Arab League, spearheaded by Qatar, culminated in the Doha Agreement. This agreement outlined the prompt election of army chief Michel Sleiman as the consensus presidential candidate, the general allocation of cabinet positions in a new administration, and reform of the electoral law, a key demand of the Christian opposition. The republic's new president was elected on May 25, 2008, and a new government was established soon after (Makdisi et al., 2010). During the initial wave of Arab Uprisings in 2011, only a few hundred Lebanese protesters called for the collapse of the sectarian regime. In 2015, four years later, those figures grew to tens of thousands, as citizens demonstrated against the government and political leaders′ inability to set up fundamental waste management services (termed the 'garbage crisis'). The 2015 protests marked an initial public demand against 'all' political elites—irrespective of factions or sects—amid the 'You [all] stink' public campaign (Khneisser, 2019). Another four years later, on October 17, 2019, coinciding with the second wave of Arab Uprisings (for example, Sudan, Iraq, Algeria, Jordan), hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens erupted in widespread protests throughout Lebanon in an unforeseen revolt against political elites, with widespread calls for the termination of the sectarian regime (Karam & Majed, 2022). These were the most significant gatherings ever documented in Lebanese history, spanning the entire country and drawing participation from all sects and political affiliations. When COVID-19 emerged a few months later, the level of protests had notably decreased, and the unstructured, leaderless opposition to the ruling class appeared fragmented and in decline. Despite the scale of the protests, the political elite retained power, as economic deterioration and public health emergencies diverted

attention toward immediate survival. The Lebanese pound decreased in value by more than 90%, and a report from the World Bank indicated that 'the financial and economic crisis in Lebanon could be among the top 10, or perhaps top three, most severe crisis events worldwide since the mid-1800s' (World Bank Group: Middle East and North African Region, 2021). Even the devastating ammonium nitrate explosion in Beirut on August 4, 2020—which destroyed large parts of the city—failed to galvanize renewed public mobilization or provoke meaningful accountability from the ruling elite (Al-Hajj et al., 2021). In its aftermath, emigration surged by 446% (Beirut Today, 2022).

From October 2023 to November 2024, the latest phase of heightened tensions and violence occurred between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, primarily impacting the region known as South Lebanon. To provide some context, following the Hamas assault from Gaza on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, Hezbollah and Palestinian factions initiated strikes from South Lebanon against northern Israel on the following day in support of Gaza. In retaliation, Israel launched strikes on South Lebanon in a cycle of violence that persisted until mid-September 2024. At this stage, Israel expanded and intensified its assaults on Lebanon in both geographic reach and severity until a ceasefire was implemented on November 27, 2024. The truce was set to last until 26 January 2025, though the future beyond that remains uncertain (Peisch, 2025). On January 9, 2025, Lebanon's parliament elected General Joseph Aoun as president, resolving a two-year deadlock. Since the end of the previous president's term in October 2022, Parliament had been unsuccessful in electing a president on 12 occasions. Aoun has been the commander of the Lebanese Army since March 2017 (CSIS, 2025).

After examining Lebanon's complex history, attention now turns to a key aspect of its cultural identity: sport. In Lebanon, sports occupy a somewhat peripheral role in the development of

the ‘modern state.’ The initial clubs appeared in the early 20th century, before the establishment of the French Mandate in 1920 (Soutou, 2015). Constructed in 1957 to accommodate the Arab Sports Games, Beirut’s Camille Chamoun Sports Stadium was, for a period, the most advanced sports facility in the Near East. It was in this same timeframe that Lebanon secured its first two Olympic medals at the 1952 Helsinki Games (Reiche, 2017). In 1997, the year Beirut held the eighth Pan-Arab Games, and seven years following the conclusion of the civil war (1975–1990), Lebanon reestablished its presence in the regional and international sports arena. The nation has hosted numerous significant sports events, such as the Arab Football Supercup in 1999, the Asian Football Cup in 2000, and the Francophonie Games 2009. In recent years, Lebanon held the 2017 Asian Basketball Cup at the upgraded Nouhad Nawfal Stadium in Zouk Mosbeh (Maugendre & Gasparini, 2024). Political interference in Lebanese sports, often aligned with sectarian interests, is a well-documented phenomenon. To begin with the history of Lebanon’s youth clubs and their connection to the state project, Baun (2017) traced two sporting organizations that later became political parties and had an impact beyond the 1930s and 1940s. The ‘Kata’ib’ and ‘Najjadeh’ might collaborate with one another, as they did in 1943, thanks to their shared models, which are based on young discipline, physical fitness, and non-elite populism. Sports were mobilized through the ‘Kata’ib’ and ‘Najjadeh’ to confront the French Mandate. However, these groups also had the potential to clash due to their divergent perspectives on Lebanon, partially shaped by cultures emphasizing physical strength and aggression, and larger regional developments from the 1950s and onward. The author believes that sports were the essence of anti-colonialism, and the nation-state was substituted by military preparations for the purpose of war. Strength, defense, and honor were central values for the youth in these parties, who were prepared to carry out violence when internal and external politics became a matter of life and death by the 1950s.

Furthermore, Reiche (2011) mentions the purpose of sports in Lebanon, stating that he believes sports do not connect but rather further divide people. Confessionalism and the political system of the nation generate circumstances that only permit competition within sects. The sports sector, especially the professional men's teams in football and basketball, is being used as a tool for competition within and between sects. The sports sector in Lebanon is being served to split Lebanese society rather than to create a unified society. The quarrel in the sports sector not only mirrors sectarianism in the country but is also being used as a catalyst for creating sectarian conflicts. Furthermore, the author explains the case of professional sports leagues that have a special place in Lebanon's sectarian structure. According to Reiche (2011), there is no other industry with as much rivalry, both within and between sects. Sport is the only arena where there is as much open conflict between various sectarian and political parties. Moreover, alongside confessionalism and the family and regional background, clientelism has a crucial role in the comprehension of Lebanese society. Also, professional sports teams are completely reliant on their sponsors. Moreover, research by Nassif and Amara (2015) mentions the presence of clashes and competition between different religious groups in the sporting field. Indeed, although there is no official allocation of powers according to religious affiliations inside the national sport system, settlements take place to build up an internal 'peaceful climate' within multiple sport organizations. Additionally, the political system in Lebanon, which relies on confessionalism, is reflected in the national sports movement and affects its principles.

From a sports viewpoint, apart from men's basketball at both club and national team levels that has succeeded in securing trophies or 'runner-up spots' in regional contests, the main accomplishments of Lebanese athletes are qualifying for the Olympic Games (Reiche, 2018) or continental events in team sports. In terms of outcomes, the Pan-Arab Games and competitions produce

the highest number of wins, although the sub-regional level seems to limit Lebanese success (Maugendre, 2023).

After examining the dynamic sports culture in Lebanon, it is important to reflect on the historical factors that have influenced Lebanon, especially those from France and the United States. Lebanon's distinctive location between East and West makes it highly open to various cultures and languages. The instruction of languages besides the native language, Arabic, in pre-university education has been shaped by foreign influences that unfolded in three phases (Frayha, 1999). In the initial phase, foreign missionaries from the 17th to the 20th centuries had considerable freedom to utilize their native languages and set up schools that emerged from Ottoman-European interactions. The French and British were primarily engaged during this time, with the former being more involved. The second stage, under the French Mandate (Decree No. 2079, dated June 20, 1924), made Arabic and French instruction mandatory in private schools (Jarrar et al., 1988). As a result, schools that taught English and Arabic were required to also teach French. During that period, French schools accounted for 80% of all foreign institutions. At the tertiary level, the American University of Beirut, a prominent English-speaking university in Lebanon and the Middle East, established in 1866, utilized Arabic as the medium of instruction until 1882, after which courses commenced in English (Abu Ghazaleh, 1990; Zachs, 2005). It was during the third phase, following Lebanon's independence in 1943 from French control, that the number of schools offering English as the second foreign language rose (Atiyeh, 1970). However, the number of students studying English only increased significantly in the 1970s when English started to emerge as a vital method of global communication. Since then, numerous schools decided to implement a trilingual system that includes English as the third language (Abu Ghazaleh, 1990; Zachs, 2005). The

historical views of France and the United States of America regarding Lebanon illustrate the enduring effects of colonial and cultural legacies on the country's development. These values have shaped Lebanon's identity and social customs, ultimately impacting the view and engagement in sports. Prior to thoroughly examining the French and North American sports models, it is essential to analyze the distinctions between the North American and European sports models, emphasizing their differing priorities, frameworks, and governance strategies. This comparison will illuminate how varying cultural heritages influence the nation's sports activities and community involvement.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the sports cultures of Europe and the United States of America diverged significantly. Sports such as baseball, basketball, hockey, and 'American football' became more popular in the U.S. compared to Europe. The most favored sports in Europe include tennis, cycling, gymnastics, and 'global football' (commonly referred to as soccer) (Van Bottenburg, 2013). The North American sports framework is characterized by the prevalence of professional sports, where participants and organizers pursue commercial objectives and operate as 'profit maximizers'; additionally, the vital role of schools and colleges in organizing sports and developing numerous skilled student-athletes is also well-recognized (Barros et al., 2002). Furthermore, the league systems adhering to the North American sports framework are made up of closed leagues featuring a salary cap limit (Dietl & Duschl, 2012). A clear distinction between amateur and professional sports is also a characteristic of U.S. sports (Klingmuller, 2001). From an organizational perspective, these two aspects of U.S. sports have been differentiated for more than 100 years (Maier, 1995; Ridpath, 2018).

In the U.S., the advancement of amateur sports is primarily driven by high schools and colleges (Ridpath et al., 2019). The implementation of athletics programs in universities sparked rivalry among them (Dumond et al., 2008). Geiger (2013) suggests that university sports in Canada

and the United States generally enhance student-athletes' academics by encouraging them to pursue their degrees and athletic skills to elevate the leagues' competitive standards. Moreover, institutions have succeeded in establishing successful sports programs; thus, American intercollegiate sports intend to offer sports scholarships to international student-athletes to develop a triumphant program and competitive teams on an international scale (Pierce et al., 2011). To achieve this goal, universities began allocating budgets for sports to develop and improve sports programs (Bolen et al., 2019). These athletic budgets encompass a crucial element known as sports scholarships. Universities offer sports scholarships to students recognized for their exceptional abilities in a specific sport (Chouinard et al., 1999). Nevertheless, the coaching staff in universities aim to develop successful athletic teams to compete with other colleges. Multiple elements impact student-athletes' decisions on which college to commit to, and college sports programs aim to persuade high school athletes to join their varsity teams in order to create competitive teams against other colleges (Dumond et al., 2008).

In contrast, Barros et al. (2002) argue that the European sports model is characterized by a deep commitment to grassroots involvement and voluntary efforts. The 2007 Parliament Report regarding the future of professional football in Europe (Committee on Culture and Education) observed similarly that 'European sport, especially football, is an integral element of European identity, culture, and citizenship, as well as the European Football Model, which is defined by open sports competitions in a pyramid structure where several hundred thousand amateur clubs along with millions of volunteers and players form the foundation for the elite professional clubs (Pijetlovic, 2018). Research by Popova and Zuev (2018) examines these principles of the European sports model: The first organizational principle is a pyramidal, hierarchical management system; the second is the promotion and relegation system; and the third principle focuses on broadcasting

rights. In terms of the existing governance structure of sports in Europe, governments play an important and stringent role through national sports regulations (Popp et al., 2009). International success in elite sports at global events is crucial for many nations, just as the public health benefits of sports participations are important for all citizens. Certain European countries adopt the 'Sport for All' framework to provide athletic opportunities and improve well-being for all individuals, irrespective of age, gender, capability, faith, refugee status, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation (Green & Houlihan, 2005).

In conclusion, the European sports structure is shaped like a pyramid with local sports clubs forming the base, similarly to the American model which has schools at the bottom of the pyramid. Community clubs are categorized within regional and national sports organizations. At the top of the pyramid are international organizations that serve as representative regulatory agencies for all sports on a global scale. Athletes from the United States also participate in world championships that are organized by those international federations (Ridpath, 2018).

Sport based on education in the U.S., particularly at colleges and universities, is not only commercially viable, but also a crucial source for developing athletes in the United States of America (Forde, 2015; Ridpath, 2018). This contrasts with the majority of European nations where elite sports development primarily operates within a sports club framework that is separate from the European educational system (Fort, 2000). Concentrating on participation across the entire population can not only elevate international sports standards and involvement but also improve human health, reduce healthcare costs, and allow workers to contribute to society (Ridpath et al., 2020). The American and European models emphasize elite and professional athletic development within an environment designed to accommodate more students for increased sports opportunities and growth (Popp et al., 2009; Ridpath, 2018; Ritter & Breuer, 2000; Thoma & Chalip, 1996).

The world features two sports models that are among the most mainstream ones: The North American model and the European model. There are several key distinctions between these two sports models; Beginning with the North American sports framework, Andreff (2011) asserts that this specific sports framework mainly functions with a substantial commercial sports sector made up of profit-driven entities, including colleges and professional sports franchises. On the other hand, Andreff (2011) suggests that the European sports model includes a notion of amateur and professional sports that focuses less on profit-driven organizations. It features a pyramidal organization where millions of grassroots sports participants and numerous small sports associations compete in local events (at the lowest amateur divisions or leagues) to elite sports, akin to the American model but with a distinct format. Even with the distinctions between the two sports models, certain similarities can be identified. Nafziger (2008) claims that both sports models enhance competition at the elite level for the benefit of fans; Additionally, the two sports models favor competitive balance among clubs according to two principles: equal numbers of teams and income uncertainty. Furthermore, these two models usually separate sports from potential political influence and any economic interference (Nafziger, 2008). The educational organizations emerged as the main coordinators of sports in the United States, while the voluntary institutions held the significant sway in Europe. The American model and the European system both emphasized elite sport and were shaped by the idea of 'sports for all. The school and university model became the prevailing system in the United States, while the club model gained prominence in Europe. In the United States, educational institutions established sports departments, constructed athletic facilities and courts, and became well-recognized as advocates for various sports. Athletics conducted at colleges and universities turned increasingly competitive, tied to accomplishments and sports

standings. The coaches and sports directors of the varsity teams create their sports programs at the elite level with the goal of achieving victory (Van Bottenburg, 2013).

Conversely, the European educational system regards these sports competitions as having little significance in their educational realm; although sports contests occur among European universities, they do not receive substantial media coverage. This phenomenon significantly contributed to the growth of sports solely within sports clubs (Ridpath et al., 2020). Colleges strategically use athletic programs to boost the number of student applicants (Toma & Cross, 1998). Furthermore, although education and athletics are combined in the U.S., the European student-athletes who participated there mentioned that a significant amount of time is taken away from school for sports competitions and training, which can adversely affect the educational goals of attending college (Ridpath et al., 2020). To attract elite student-athletes, universities must significantly invest in enhancing its sports facilities, which will facilitate the recruitment process. Upgrading these facilities will ensure long-term success for their sports programs (Goss et al., 2006). Furthermore, the expansion of sports facilities is crucial in convincing student-athletes to compete for the university in NCAA tournaments in the U.S.; Universities must develop appealing and effective sports facilities to attract highly ranked student-athletes to their varsity teams (Huml et al., 2019).

Research Questions Around Lebanese University Sports System (Organization, Differences and Characteristics)

This thesis intends to thoroughly analyze the characteristics of the Lebanese university sports system, investigating its distinct features and assessing its standing in comparison to the North American and French models. Furthermore, this comparative study seeks to examine how North American and French models have emerged in Lebanese universities and to analyze their contribution to the development of university sports and sports in general.

This research is guided by three key questions designed to explore various dimensions of the subject and establish a structure for the evaluation.

Research Question 1: How is the Lebanese University Sports System Organized?

To understand the features of the Lebanese university sports model, it is essential to analyze the organizational framework of sports in these establishments. The main regulatory authority for university athletics in Lebanon is the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL). Founded in 1947, the FSUL was formally acknowledged in 1949 as a public utility through Presidential Decree No. 14064. This acknowledgment emphasizes the federation's important function in advancing and overseeing university sports throughout the nation. The FSUL functions under the guidance of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS). This supervision is essential for the growth of university sports providing a framework for governance and funding. As a result, due to the absence of scholarly research on the Lebanese university sports, it was necessary to interview key stakeholders. Interacting with stakeholders such as sports administrators, coaches, and student-athletes provided valuable insights into the structure and operations of university sports in Lebanon. These interviews offered important perspectives on the history of the FSUL and its member universities, facilitating a more thorough examination of how sports are organized and administered inside the FSUL. This essential comprehension of the Lebanese university sports system will act as a reference point for comparisons with other global models.

Research Question 2: What are the Main Differences Between the North American and French Sports Models?

In contrast, to accurately compare the Lebanese university sports system with the North American and French models, it is crucial to understand the unique features of each framework.

The analysis of these characteristics can more effectively clarify the position of the Lebanese sports model within this comparative context. This examination will uncover how the Lebanese system in universities corresponds with or differs from the sports systems in universities adopted in North American and French universities. Key differences exist between the two models. The two primary distinctions lie in their structural setups concerning sports participation (the club model versus the school model) and regarding professional sports competition (open leagues versus closed leagues). After the school model established itself as predominant in the United States and the club model in Europe, they initiated other self-reinforcing, path-dependent processes that reinforced the cultural preferences and financial advantages of the established model while sidelining the benefits of pursuing a different institutional structure (Van Bottenburg, 2013).

In the United States, a dominant educational-commercial model has emerged. This arrangement is defined by a system where schools, colleges, and commercially managed sports facilities serve as the primary organizing basis for sports involvement. Voluntary organizations and governmental bodies have played a relatively minor role in this setup compared to their European equivalents. In Europe, conversely, a voluntary-governmental structure has emerged as the dominant system, highlighting the significant role of voluntary sports clubs and associations. In numerous European nations, these voluntary organizations have faced and been aided by a more dynamic public sector, while the influence of business and education remained minimal until the late 20th century; at least until the final decades of the twentieth century (Van Bottenburg, 2013).

Acknowledging these distinctions is crucial for situating the Lebanese university sports system within a worldwide context.

Research Question 3: Which of the Two Sports Models—North American or French is More Closely Associated with the University Sports and Sports in Lebanon?

The third research question investigates which of the two sports models is more closely associated with university sports and the broader Lebanese university sports system. When comparing the North American and French models of university sports and athletics in Lebanon, significant differences emerge. This study aims to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of each framework for advancing university sports in Lebanon. Through an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each system, the study will explore their ability to improve sports programs at universities in Lebanon. The aim is to identify which structure is more successful in fostering a dynamic sports culture and boosting student involvement, ultimately guiding strategies for the future growth of sports in the area.

Therefore, this comparison is important as it provides a structure for comprehending how sports are presently structured within the nation. By contrasting the Lebanese context with these two well-established models, the research not only emphasizes which components might be modified to enhance the system, but also reveals the features of the Lebanese university sports system itself. This analysis holds both theoretical and practical significance, as it provides important insights for enhancing university sports, influencing future policy, and fostering a more cohesive and efficient sports framework in Lebanon. This assessment will aid in determining an ideal structure to direct the future advancement of the Lebanese university sports framework.

Problematizing the Process of Institutionalization of Sport in Lebanon

Analyzing sports models in different contexts can provide valuable insights into the processes of institutionalization and growth in particular settings. In Lebanon, the effects of North American and French models have molded the realm of university sports, leading to an investigation of their distinct frameworks, governance, and cultural effects. This investigation prompts the

question: **Does the study of the North American and French models in Lebanese universities provide a better understanding of the process of institutionalization of sports in Lebanon?**

To respond to this problematic, it is necessary to suggest working hypotheses. These hypotheses will help clarify the process and characteristics of sport in Lebanon. Ultimately, three hypotheses can be highlighted.

Hypothesis 1: Sport mirrors society, its interest groups and its political issues. This means that studying the Lebanese sport model is also studying its unique institutional construction.

This hypothesis suggests that sports are closely connected to social dynamics. In Lebanon, the impact of different interest groups—whether political parties, religious groups, or regional organizations—shapes the sports environment. Since Hypothesis 1 argues that sports mirror society, examples from football and basketball demonstrate this dynamic. Al-Masri (2016) believed that football stadiums became a theatre that presents the astonishing performance of politics, wealth, and power, as well as the result of the interplay of both local and global variations that has happened over the span of almost two decades. The postwar period guided in a new 'glocal' model of the political elite, which integrated a corporate background and the utilization of wealth with efficient tactics of ascendance to power, namely philanthropy, sectarianism and clientelism. Boukhater (2004) focused on the relationship between politics, sectarianism, and basketball. Lebanese people are passionate about basketball. However, one wonders if this passion would have been so ardent had this sport not, in one way or another, channeled aspirations of a religious or political order. Two prominent examples are the Beiruti basketball clubs Hekmeh (Sagesse) and Al Riyadi club, founded by Boukhater. These two clubs have gathered a fanbase from their respective surrounding neighborhoods: The Christian neighborhoods of Achrafiyeh and Mount Lebanon for

Hekmeh, and Sunni Muslims from the Manara district for Al Riyadi Club. This hypothesis situates sports within Lebanon's broader sociopolitical context.

Hypothesis 2: The systemic organization of sports models is the result of games of interest, power relations and influence between actors in sport.

This hypothesis suggests that the structured framework of sports models is formed by the interaction of interests, power relations, and influences among different parties involved in the sports field. It indicates that the organization of sports models is shaped as much by official regulations as by stakeholder power dynamics, driven by the interactions and discussions among important stakeholders, including governing organizations, athletes, coaches, and sponsors. Analyzing these interactions offers deeper insights into how sports models evolve and adjust in response to conflicting interests and power dynamics within the sports landscape.

Hypothesis 3: The evolution of world sport favors the implementation of the hybrid Lebanese model between the North American and French model.

This hypothesis is examined using criteria gathered from student-athlete and sports director surveys from Lebanese universities involved in the Lebanese Federation of University Sport for the 2023/2024 academic year: sports scholarships, recruitment of student-athletes, focus on winning, training duration, sports facilities, budget for sports, and governance. This method will assist us in outlining the existing state of university sports in Lebanon and evaluating its position compared to the more established models from North America and France. After inspecting the results, the Lebanese university sports system appears to hold a hybrid position, integrating aspects from both the North American and French sports models. To conclude, this hypothesis proposes that Lebanon's university sports reflect a hybrid evolution shaped by global influences.

Methodology: The Choice of Mixed-Methods

The purpose of this section is to provide details on the scientific method favored in the context of this study, in order to address the questions and hypotheses raised earlier. This segment intends to outline the methodological structure of the study, ensuring a concentrated investigation of the primary topic. To achieve this, the study describes the research context, defines the specific area of focus, and explains the rationale for selecting Lebanon as the case study. Additionally, it outlines the research design and techniques used, emphasizing the processes for gathering and analyzing data. The first objective is to examine how the North American and French sports models are reflected in Lebanese universities. The second is to assess the contribution of these two models to the development of sports in Lebanese universities at a micro-level and in the country's sport sector at a macro-level.

To meet the research goals, a mixed-methods approach was adopted. This included both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methods. A quantitative survey was carried out with a structured questionnaire given to a sample of university student-athletes engaged in varsity teams (N=131). This facilitated the gathering of quantifiable information about the state of sports in their universities. Simultaneously, a quantitative survey was conducted through questionnaires with important stakeholders, such as sports directors and in some cases university officials (N=22). These questionnaires offered a more profound understanding of the contextual, institutional, and cultural elements establishing the sports model in Lebanese universities. The information was processed and analyzed with Microsoft Excel, enabling the computation of descriptive statistics—including frequencies and percentages—and the generation of charts and tables to visually depict important trends. Alongside the quantitative analyses carried out with Microsoft Excel, a qualitative lexical

analysis was conducted on open-ended interview data gathered from a sub-sample of student-athletes (N=30) to enhance the interpretative aspect of the research. The qualitative dataset was examined utilizing IRaMuTeQ (Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires), a software based on the R statistical framework and Python coding, which is extensively employed for text data analysis in the social sciences. This examination incorporated various complementary methods, such as descriptive lexical statistics, word-cloud visualizations, co-occurrence similarity analysis, and Reinert's Descending Hierarchical Classification (CHD). These methods allowed for the recognition of prevailing lexical domains, thematic frameworks, and relational patterns within the discourse of student-athletes, especially concerning their views on the Lebanese, French, and American university sports structures. Incorporating IRaMuTeQ into the methodological framework bolstered the qualitative rigor of the research through a systematic, reproducible, and data-informed analysis of participants' narratives, thus enriching the comparative aspect of the mixed-methods approach.

Additionally, a qualitative survey was conducted through semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders in the Lebanese sports landscape (N=6). The integration of these two techniques was chosen to achieve a broad, generalizable understanding of the existing scenario (via the questionnaire). Questionnaires are commonly used in survey contexts to gather information from a substantial number of individuals (approximately between 100 and 1,000). One major benefit of questionnaires is that they simplify the process of collecting responses from a wide audience, resulting in data that can be regarded as producing more broadly applicable findings (Rowley, 2014).

As well as a more in-depth, interpretive perspective (through the interviews), the goal is to achieve a 'comprehensive understanding' of what is occurring in a situation by conducting extensive and detailed conversations with the participants involved. In-depth interviews allow for comprehensive data gathering from participants and enable researchers to explore elements of what a participant expresses in ways that a more formal method, like a structured interview, might not permit, obtaining a more complete understanding of an experience. Additionally, in depth interviews empower individuals to 'express themselves', thereby enhancing the reliability of the information (Fox, 2009). This combined method enhanced the research by facilitating a more thorough examination of both the structural and human aspects of the Lebanese university sports framework.

- **Questionnaires for student-athletes: 131 questionnaires from 24 different Lebanese universities in the FSUL**

This survey was specifically aimed at 24 Lebanese universities that are members in the FSUL, intending to collect information from 131 student-athletes participating in different sports permitted by FSUL criteria. The responses will yield important information to improve the understanding of the characteristics of the sports models that are adopted by their respective universities.

- **Questionnaires for sports directors: 22 interviews from 22 different Lebanese universities**

This second questionnaire was aimed at the 22 athletic directors from universities affiliated with the FSUL. The main aim was to understand the sports models they implement in their institutions. The data collected were intended to reveal the defining characteristics of the university sports models currently in place. The questionnaire included questions related to sports scholarships, training systems, scouting and recruitment of student-athletes, the number of varsity teams,

and the availability of training courts. These questions aimed to reveal the sports models implemented in their universities.

- **Questionnaires for student-athletes: 30 interviews from different Lebanese universities**

This survey aimed at student-athletes registered in various Lebanese universities who are engaged in university sports competitions. The primary aim was to gather student-athletes' views and firsthand experiences within the Lebanese university sports framework and to contrast these views with their understanding of the French and North American models. The survey encompassed inquiries regarding recruitment and selection processes, transitions from school to university athletics, coaching and training quality, training intensity and timetables, balance between sports and education, and the sufficiency of institutional support (financial, medical, and academic). Further inquiries investigated training facilities, level of competition, global exposure, media presence, and pathways for advancement to national teams or professional careers. The survey also covered governance issues, including the role, transparency, and strategic direction of the FSUL, along with identified obstacles to athlete development and the professionalization of university sports in Lebanon. In general, these inquiries sought to pinpoint the advantages, disadvantages, and structural constraints of the Lebanese university sports framework from the viewpoint of student-athletes.

In parallel, data were collected using a qualitative method, specifically through interviews. Indeed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with interviewees during the period between the years 2024 and 2025. Six key figures in the Lebanese sports sector were interviewed to gain diverse perspectives on university sports governance and policy.

Table 1: *List of Interviewees, Including Prominent Figures in Lebanese Sports*

Name	Position in the Sports Movement	The Purpose of the Interview
Mr. Sami Garabedian July 2024	President of the FSUL from 2021–2023	Gathering information about the FSUL and the history of Lebanese university sports
Mr. Mohamad Oueidat August 2024	Head of the Sports Department at the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports In 2024	To better understand the position of the FSUL in the current sports system and the Lebanese sports structure
Mr. Ziad Saadeh October 2024	Current President of the FSUL 2024-Present	Gathering information about the FSUL competitions
Mr. Maroun El Khoury October 2024	Head of Sports Department at USJ and Secretary of National Teams Affairs at the FSUL (2024–present)	Acquiring additional information of the University Sports Conference 'USC' competitions organized by numerous private Lebanese universities
Mr. Jihad Salameh January 2025	An Olympic International lecturer and one of the most prominent figures in Lebanese sports	Gaining a better understanding of the structure of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth

		and Sports and to gather information about the 29 Lebanese sports federations that are members of the Lebanese Olympic Committee
Mr. Wadih Abdelnour September 2025	A prominent Lebanese sports journalist	To understand media visibility and reporting of FSUL university competitions in Lebanon

These individuals were classified according to their sports functions and duties within the Lebanese sports framework. To support this, a guide was created for carrying out semi-structured interviews, which is especially useful for examining topics concerning the history of sports in the Lebanese universities, the history of the USC competitions, and to acquire a clearer insight into the organization of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports and to collect details regarding the 29 Lebanese sports federations that belong to the Lebanese Olympic Committee.

Alongside the interviews with prominent Lebanese figures, discussions took place with two specialists to gather more insights into sports systems and policies:

- Denis Bernardeau-Moreau, a professor of sports sociology (February 2025), discussed employee and volunteer salaries within French sports federations and examined the compensation for volunteer contributions.

- Dr. Tarek Assaf, head of the Physical Education and Sports Committee at the Center for Educational Research and Development within the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (September 2025), addressed the Youth and Sports Committee's meeting that evaluated proposed laws to designate Physical Education and Sports (PES) as a core subject in official exams for intermediate and general secondary certifications.

Organizational Theories: Mimetic Isomorphism and Sociology of Sport Organization

This theoretical framework addresses three primary areas of inquiry. Building on this foundation, the discussion begins with an exploration of the roles of National Sports Federations (NSFs), mimetic isomorphism in non-profit organizations, and the sociology of sports entities. The framework aims to connect these theoretical concepts to the Lebanese context offering perspectives on how these theories are relevant in the nation's sports environment.

The discussion begins with an exploration of the roles of National Sports Federations (NSFs), drawing on Chelladurai and Zintz's (2015) work, 'Functions of National Sport Governing Bodies: A Network Perspective,' and in Provan and Kenis's article of 'Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness'. These articles underscore the main duties of NSFs, stressing that their fundamental function is to supervise member organizations in accordance with the constitution sanctioned by the General Assembly. The authors suggest that this governance framework is vital for maintaining the efficient operation and integrity of the sports network. To link this to the Lebanese context, a historical overview of Lebanon was provided to contextualize the development of its sports institutions to demonstrate the relationship between society and sports, especially regarding the National Sports Federations (NSFs). This analysis showcases how Lebanon's intricate social structure—formed by its varied cultural, political, and religious factors—has influenced the growth and operation of sports organizations.

In contrast to structural governance, the second dimension examines mimetic isomorphism within non-profit organizations, citing significant studies including DiMaggio and Powell's 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields' and Bernardeau-Moreau's paper 'Mimetic Isomorphism in Non-Profit Organizations (NPO): Sports Associations in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Departments' along with additional references. DiMaggio and Powell explore how organizations frequently replicate one another when faced with comparable challenges, resulting in greater uniformity within their sectors. Moreau's research focuses on how sports organizations adjust by imitating successful frameworks from other entities to improve their credibility and efficiency. To contextualize these theories within Lebanon, the study investigates the political influence of France and its effects on local sports structures. To examine isomorphism, this study investigated the political impact of France on Lebanon and its effects on sports within the nation. A comparative analysis was conducted to examine the influence of the French sports system on Lebanon. By recognizing the similarities and differences between the two systems, the objective was to determine whether French governance models have been replicated in Lebanon. This analysis aids in understanding how the historical connections between the two countries might have influenced the growth of sports institutions in Lebanon.

Continuing the analysis, the third thematic focus addresses the sociology of sports organizations. This subject centers on the sociology of sports entities, citing important works like Slack and Kikulis's piece 'The Sociological Study of Sport Organizations: Some Observations on the Situation in Canada' and Malenfant's 'Sociology of Sports Organizations in France', along with additional references. These research efforts investigate how social interactions and organizational frameworks affect the operation and growth of sports organizations across various cultural settings.

Furthermore, the analysis explores the professionalization processes within sports federations, utilizing perspectives from Thibault, Slack, and Hinings in their work 'Professionalism, Structures and Systems: The Impact of Professional Staff on Voluntary Sport Organizations', alongside Nagel et al. in 'Professionalization of Sport Federations: A Multi-Level Framework for Analyzing Forms, Causes and Consequences' among other references. These studies examine the impact of incorporating professional personnel on the governance and efficiency of sports federations, emphasizing the consequences of professionalization for organizational development and flexibility. Collectively, these citations offer extensive insight into the social and structural elements influencing sports organizations and the persistent movements toward professionalization in the field. To further apply these sociological concepts to the Lebanese case, the function of volunteering within the national sports federations was examined, paying particular attention to the organization of the 29 Lebanese sports federations affiliated with the Lebanese Olympic Committee. Furthermore, the study compares the staff-to-volunteer ratios between Lebanese and French sports federations, examining how these organizations vary in terms of staff and resources. This analysis also involved investigating the differences in salaries between staff and volunteers in Lebanese and French federations. Together, these theoretical perspectives offer a thorough foundation for analyzing the evolution, governance, and challenges of the Lebanese university sports system, particularly concerning North American and French influences. They assist in outlining the institutional behaviors, sociopolitical dynamic, and organizational changes that influence university sports in Lebanon.

Plan of the Thesis

This plan outlines the structure of the thesis in three main parts: a theoretical framework (part I), a historical and theoretical foundation (Part II), and an empirical analysis based on field

data (Part III). This thesis is split into three primary sections, each fulfilling a unique yet related objective.

Part I, Chapter 1 explains the theoretical framework of the thesis and is divided into three main topics. Topic 1 emphasizes the roles of National Sports Federations, focusing on how they are managed and how they help organize and regulate sports. Topic 2 discusses mimetic isomorphism in non-profit associations, showing how organizations often copy each other's practices when they are uncertain or facing pressure from outside. Topic 3 covers the sociology of sports organizations, giving different viewpoints on how they act, are structured, and change over time. All these areas together give the basic ideas needed to understand how sports are organized and developed in Lebanon.

In part II, Chapter 1 starts by providing a detailed summary of Lebanon's historical development. This chapter outlines the wider context in which Lebanese institutions—and consequently, sports—have evolved by examining the country's significant political, social, and cultural changes across different periods. Grasping this context is crucial for placing the rise and development of organized sports in the country.

Expanding on this groundwork, Chapter 2 redirects attention to the historical background of sports in Lebanon. It initially examines the time before missionary influence, emphasizing native physical activities and community-oriented movement traditions. The chapter subsequently explores how the arrival of overseas missionaries signified a pivotal moment in the evolution of organized sports, prompting structural transformations and formalizing athletic practices. Additionally, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Lebanon's sports structure, to observe the changes in its structure throughout the years.

Chapter 3 builds directly on the institutional analysis in Chapter 2, narrowing the focus to the FSUL as a case study of sports governance in Lebanese universities. It then examines its beginnings, purpose, and development, highlighting how its function has impacted sports in universities. It directly employs the historical and structural insights from Chapter 2, offering a more concentrated perspective on one of the key institutions related to this research.

Chapter 4 links the historical and institutional context to the thesis's central comparative focus by examining how French and North American models have shaped Lebanese education and, by extension, university sports. It explores the historical influence—particularly those from France and the United States—on Lebanese educational institutions. By examining the influence of these two systems on curricula, linguistics, the chapter underscores the dual legacies that persistently affect Lebanese educational systems.

Part III of the thesis shifts from foundational historical and theoretical concepts to practical analysis. This part showcases the findings of the research and the comparative analysis. Chapters 1 and 2 present the results from questionnaires directed to student-athletes and sports directors about the Lebanese model. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 concentrate on situating the Lebanese system alongside the French and U.S. models by examining both quantitative and qualitative results in a comparative analysis.

Introduction to Part I: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This theoretical framework examines essential ideas that shape the management and interactions of sports organizations, with a particular emphasis on National Sports Federations (NSFs). The initial topic explores the roles and management of NSFs, emphasizing their responsibilities in regulating, developing, and advancing sport at the national level. Building on this foundation, the second topic focuses on mimetic isomorphism in nonprofit sports organizations, examining how these entities frequently emulate similar structures and practices because of external influences, like the impact of successful peers. In contrast to governance structures, the third theoretical dimension explores the intersection of the sociology of sports organizations and the professionalization of sports federations, examining how voluntary sports organizations transform into more structured, professional entities to satisfy the increasing needs of contemporary sports management and governance. **Collectively, these topics offer an extensive perspective for understanding the intricate connections among governance, organizational conduct, and professionalization in sports. In this research, these ideas will be investigated within the French and Lebanese contexts**. By analyzing these subjects across various cultural and institutional environments, this study seeks to attain a better understanding of the dynamics of sports organizations in Lebanon and France. These theoretical domains are critical for assessing the governance and development of Lebanese university sports, particularly as they relate to external models such as those of France and North America.

Looking at university sports in Lebanon requires more than just outlining the American and French models side-by-side. It is essential to unpack the underlying power dynamics driving

them. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) use the concept of mimetic isomorphism, which helps explain why these competing models do not simply coexist peacefully. It ultimately comes down to a battle of institutional logics. On one hand, the North American model emphasizes elite recruitment and professionalization. This creates a global standard of prestige that exerts a strong influence on Lebanese institutions. Because of this influence, universities built on traditional French administrative roots find themselves forced to renegotiate how they operate. It is not necessarily that the French system is failing them; rather the sheer 'power of the image' attached to the American brand makes it a strategic necessity to adapt. What we see in Lebanon today, then, is not a perfect copy of either system. Instead, local sports systems are shaped right in the middle of this tension—caught between historical administrative ties and the modern demand for international branding. The resulting framework acts almost like a pressure cooker. To survive and stay relevant in the educational market, institutional actors have to actively mix elements from both worlds.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical Framework: Roles of Sport Institutions, Mimetic Isomorphism, Sociology of Sport and Professionalization

1.1 Topic 1: Functions of National Sports Federations (Governance of NSFs)

National Sports Federations (NSFs) have received significant attention from governments and scholars alike. A more recent focus has been on emphasizing the importance of good governance in NSFs and outlining what constitutes good governance. The Australian Sport Commission also states that effective governance includes aspects such as the composition of the governing board and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the organization, efficient processes within the organization, accountability in reporting actions, and making ethical decisions responsibly (Chelladurai & Zintz, 2015). The European Union has also recognized the importance of

having a clear purpose, ethical guidelines, identifying stakeholders and their roles, using democratic processes, delegating work effectively among committees, having judicial/disciplinary procedures, being inclusive, and establishing appropriate statutes, rules, and regulations to ensure accountability. Moreover, transparency and accountability are essential pillars for ensuring effective governance in sports organizations (Chelladurai & Zintz, 2015). The International Olympic Committee recently released its Agenda 20+20, which includes six recommendations focusing on good governance - Promote gender equality, form strategic partnerships, enhance advocacy capabilities, adhere to fundamental governance principles, uphold autonomy, and enhance transparency. A close examination of these rules indicates that they emphasize the importance of conducting oneself in a responsible, ethical, democratic, inclusive, and transparent manner (Chelladurai & Zintz, 2015). The management of a sport begins with the global federation composed of national federations from various nations. Conversely, provincial (or state) associations make up these national federations, which are the National Sports Federations (NSFs). An NSF primarily oversees its member organizations and maintains close ties with its constituent entities. The current study of Chelladurai and Zintz (2015) focuses on an inter-organizational network consisting of legally independent, autonomous organizations with overlapping and conflicting interests, interconnected through interactive, reciprocal exchange relationships.

In a different type of organizational network, member organizations participate in shared activities and show a structure of connections to achieve both collective and individual objectives, as well as address any issues that may arise between them. The trade associations and the professional associations would be included in this classification. The Fitness Industry Association, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, and the International Association of Sports Law are some examples of this kind of network of organizations in the sports industry (Chelladurai & Zintz,

2015). In another form of inter-organizational network, member organizations create a central authority to coordinate actions and enforce regulations toward shared objectives. This central agency can also exercise authority to make decisions and establish regulations, as well as enforce penalties for any violations of its rules by member organizations. The NCAA in the United States is an instance of an inter-organizational network connecting university athletic departments that offer similar services and have common goals while operating in similar organizational environments. Despite their unique characteristics and varied interests, universities work together to oversee their own operations and encourage intercollegiate athletics. The global level inter-organizational networks like FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) for football and FIBA (International Basketball Federation) for basketball regulate and supervise the activities of NSFs. These provincial or state level counterparts, which operate in specific geographic regions within the country, are governed by the NSFs, which are inter-organizational networks (Chelladurai & Zintz, 2015).

Provan and Kenis (2007) discuss three types of networks based on their governance structure. The initial type of network involves all members participating in decision-making processes that impact both themselves and the group as a whole. In the second option, network members give authority to one member to decide for them, or they may opt to follow a dominant member's leadership. The third type involves members being controlled by a higher authority, which could either be established by the members or imposed by an external source like a government. The NSF, representing the third type, consists of representatives elected from the member units. Schneider and Grote (2006) discuss four types of social structures - a community, the market, the government, and an organization like an NSF. These are the sets of institutional rules that dictate how individuals and groups seek their own self-interests. In a society, the interests of individuals

are placed below the interests of the group as a whole. On the other hand, individuals and organizations in a market are motivated to follow their own self-interest and engage in competition with others to thrive in the economic challenge. The state is created as individuals entrust the collective authority of the state to pursue their self-interest, and empower it to also pursue a shared interest using force, if needed. An organization is akin to a government in that it also advocates for the shared interests of its members but lacks the authority of a government. In the same way, the NSF, like a state, is a collection of its members. More precisely, it is similar to a federal state in which the member units choose their representatives for the national association, which is authorized to oversee their activities while considering the needs of both the members and the national association.

Another defining feature of an NSF is its dual role as the sole provider and sole buyer within its sport's national market. A monopoly occurs when there is just one seller of a product, while a monopsony occurs when there is only one buyer. Since no other organization in the country has any authority over the business of the sport in question, an NSF functions as both. It has monopolistic power since it is the only representative of the international federation inside national borders. It is also a monopsony as it is the sole purchaser of the talent created by member organizations and it has the exclusive authority to choose the national teams. In other words, no one else has the ability to create a national team and bring it to global tournaments. Being both a monopoly and a monopsony increases the NSF's power, but it also highlights the duties linked to those roles, such as responsibilities to individual components (Chelladurai & Zintz, 2015). In the following section, Chelladurai and Zintz (2015) identify several key responsibilities of an NSF.

1. Governing Member Organizations

As the name suggests, an NSF's primary responsibility is to oversee its member organizations in accordance with the constitution approved by the general body. Under this governance structure, each member organization is expected to comply with the rules and regulations, and the NSF is responsible for taking action against those that do not. It must also use its authority to monitor and regulate its members' actions to ensure adherence not only to its own policies but also to those of parent organizations, such as government agencies, the National Olympic Committee (NOC), and the International Federation.

2. Guarding Democracy

The NSF's democratic procedures are its real strength. It has a significant obligation to uphold and preserve the integrity of the democratic processes within its ranks.

3. Fostering Cooperation and Collaboration Among Member Units

In addition to safeguarding democratic processes, the NSF should promote constructive and amicable relationships among its member organizations. Facilitating collaboration and positive interaction is a key network function.

4. Creating Trust

Member organizations must have assurance that the NSF's activities serve the best interests of its members and the sport. This trust is essential for securing their cooperation and commitment.

5. Generation and Sharing of Revenues

NSFs play a key role in generating resources through sponsorships, broadcasting rights, government grants, licensing, ticketing, and charitable donations.

6. Enhancing Member Capacity to Generate Funds

Beyond central fundraising, NSFs are also responsible for helping their member organizations develop fundraising initiatives. O'Rourke and Chelladurai (2006) found a similar role for the NCAA in their examination of the NCAA as an inter-organizational network, which they termed Marketing and Development. In this role, the NCAA assists its member organizations in creating and promoting new goods and services as well as obtaining funding through grants, sponsorships, and donations.

7. Facilitating Effective Management of Member Organizations

NSFs should transmit their knowledge and experience to their member organizations. This includes improving daily operations, enhancing managerial skills and practices, and strengthening financial management. 'Management Enhancement' is one of the NCAA's apex duties, as defined by O'Rourke and Chelladurai (2006), whereby the NCAA helps member schools improve their managerial abilities and practices to operate more effectively and efficiently.

8. Managing Diversity

Sport governing bodies lag behind political and business sectors in promoting gender equality and diversity. The International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s emphasis on promoting women in sport at all levels and in all institutions would be in line with this growing imperative.

9. Promotion of the Sport

When discussing the promotion of sport, it is crucial to emphasize the contribution of international federations in this process. The International Sports Federations (IFs) ensure the integrity of their respective sports globally. The International Sports Federations are global non-governmental entities acknowledged by the IOC for overseeing one or more sports on a worldwide scale. The national federations, affiliated to the IF, develop the sports in their respective countries.

International Sports Federations seeking recognition from the IOC must maintain their independence and autonomy in managing their sports while ensuring that their statutes, practices, and activities align with the Olympic Charter. The IFs are tasked with the responsibility and obligation to oversee and manage the daily operations of the different sports disciplines worldwide, including the effective organization of events during the Olympic Games for those included. The IFs must also oversee the advancement of athletes engaged in these sports at all levels. Every IF oversees its sport on a global scale and guarantees its advancement and promotion. They oversee the daily management of their sports and ensure the consistent arrangement of competitions while upholding the principles of fair play. The IFs may make suggestions to the IOC regarding the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Movement overall, including the organization and execution of the Olympic Games; express their views on the bids for hosting the Olympic Games, especially regarding the technical abilities of the candidate cities; assist in preparing for the Olympic Congresses; and participate in IOC commissions (International Olympic Committee, 2025).

IFs regulate sports globally, mainly concerning the rules and technical details of the sport. In addition to their primary administrative duties, a key focus for IFs is to promote their sport. The strategies for sport development by IFs encompass (a) expanding the reach of sports to broader communities and audiences, (b) nurturing players, coaches, officials, and sports administrators, (c) hosting equitable and high-quality competitions, and (d) enhancing inclusion in and through sport. Each IF formulates and implements a range of strategies to attain their development objectives from short- to long-term. The primary approach is to enhance the abilities and skills of athletes, coaches, and officials within the sport (Khoo et al., 2024).

10. Protecting the Image of the Sport

O’Rourke and Chelladurai recognized image projection as one of the NCAA’s apex duties, wherein the organization upholds the integrity of intercollegiate athletics and its member universities while promoting a favorable image of them. Similarly, an NSF must safeguard and promote the sport’s image.

11. Developing New Products

NSFs have introduced diversified tournaments and sports formats, hosting events for both genders and age categories in different parts of the nation. These innovations boost visibility and engagement.

12. Guiding Pursuit of Excellence

The main objective for the majority of NSFs worldwide is to achieve excellence and win in international competitions. The NSF would make an effort to teach everyone the importance of striving for excellence through personal determination, sacrifice, and deliberate practice.

13. Welfare of the Athletes

As national team athletes are the most significant stakeholder group, safeguarding their welfare is arguably one of the NSF’s most critical duties.

14. Providing Leadership

NSFs need to move beyond the ‘lowest common denominator’ approach and step up to lead the organization and its members towards challenging and productive new paths. This would involve establishing fresh goals through a detailed strategy, outlining explicit policy stances, and adopting trustworthy positions. In the subsequent section, Chelladurai and Zintz (2015) explored certain implications of perceiving an NSF as the top of an inter-organizational network. NSFs

ought to be prompted to outline their key responsibilities to member organizations as objectives within their mission and vision statements. Every NSF ought to contemplate establishing a definite and robust declaration of its vision, mission, and goals that outlines its fundamental purposes and procedures.

15. Structural Alignment

In addition to highlighting the validity of the current distinction among the administrative units of the NSF, a clear definition of the apical functions of an NSF may also confirm that the tasks and responsibilities allocated to each of these units represent the apical functions. Such an endeavor may also point to the NSF's restructuring and reorganization in order to match its units with the apical duties.

16. Education and Training

Multiple international federations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have launched initiatives to train leaders of national sports governing entities. For example, the MEMOS (Executive Masters in Management of Sports Organisations) educational initiative by Olympic Solidarity aimed at training executives from National Olympic Committees and NSFs globally could feature a segment that emphasizes the primary roles of an NSF and the duties of its administrators.

17. Organizational Effectiveness

Numerous scholars have explored the effectiveness of NSFs from different angles in different continents. The success of the national teams in international tournaments, the rise in the sport's popularity, the quantity of sponsorships obtained, the degree of coverage the sport has re-

ceived, and other factors might be considered efficacy indicators at the national level. The provincial, state, and regional office holders will be the ones to assess its efficacy at the constituent level based on how successfully the NSF has performed its apical tasks.

18. Tensions in Network Management

Provan and Kenis (2007) identify three key tensions in managing networks:

a. **Efficiency vs. Inclusivity-** Balancing swift decision-making with broad participation.
b. **Internal vs. External Legitimacy -** Another type of tension mentioned by Provan and Kenis (2007), it revolves around the conflict between external and internal legitimacy. The degree to which the apex effectively organizes the actions of the rival units within the network is a measure of internal legitimacy. Internal legitimacy is predicated on member units' opinions that they get fair treatment and that their issues are sufficiently addressed. Building strong ties with external stakeholders—such as the government and media—whose backing is essential to network operation is linked to external legitimacy.
c. **Flexibility vs. Stability** is Provan and Kenis' third identified tension. An NSF should be adaptable enough to change with the wider environmental conditions, which frequently change drastically. The network's ability to detect these changes in the environment and adjust to them quickly and smoothly will determine how successful it is.

After analyzing the fundamental duties of NSFs, it is crucial to take into account the Lebanese context, where confessionalism and religious diversity have traditionally shaped political frameworks. Introduced during the French mandate, this system still influences power dynamics, including in elite sports and national federations, which frequently mirror wider sectarian and political allegiances.

In Lebanon, religious groups are often referred to as 'confessions' and include Christians (such as Maronites and Protestants) and Muslims (such as Sunnis and Shiites). Confessionalism in Lebanon is a formal power-sharing system that allocates institutional authority among religious groups. Its goal is to ensure equitable power distribution. Therefore, the government and parliamentary positions are distributed among religious communities based on their population size. This system ensures that both majority and minority religious groups are recognized by the government, allowing for fair sharing of power in various aspects. Thus, confessional variety in Lebanon refers specifically to how power is shared among various religious factions (Al Ariss, 2010). Lebanon's historical context provides insight into its diverse religious structure. Unlike diversity programs in the West which aim to eliminate discrimination, Lebanon's confessional diversity was used by the French as a means of controlling power. Following World War, I, Lebanon, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, was under French Mandate until gaining independence in 1943. The French implemented a system where the president was Maronite, the prime minister Sunni, and the speaker of the chamber of deputies Shiite. Additionally, positions in parliament and public institutions were divided among religious groups. Through this arrangement, the French dominated the Lebanese government by appointing Christian individuals to key roles instead of Muslims. In addition, the French decentralized political power in Lebanon by distributing it among various religious groups instead of building a strong secular state. Tensions arising from the lack of equality policies in 1975 exacerbated divisions between different religious communities, leading to a 15-year civil war. By 1989, the Lebanese government had agreed to ensure equal Muslim and Christian representation in key positions, ending the civil conflict but reinforcing confessional divides. In Lebanon, confessional diversity relates to the distribution of power among religious groups in political, economic, and social spheres. The term 'confessional' specifically indicates

power-sharing arrangements (Al Ariss, 2010). Confessionalism, a type of power-sharing in democracy, acts as a governing system for elite groups aimed at maintaining stability in democracies with diverse political cultures (Salamey & Payne, 2008). It is a type of Consociationalism defined by four key political principles: a broad coalition, mutual veto power, segmental autonomy, and proportional representation (Lijphart, 1977; Salamey & Payne, 2008). Consociational democracies are primarily found in diverse societies, especially those facing significant divisions (Rigby, 2000). Advocates of consociationalism argue that political stability is connected to political culture and social structure, therefore highlighting the importance of representing various conflicting communities (Lijphart, 1977). Consociational societies typically feature significant divisions in religion, language, region, race/ethnicity, and ideology; as public allegiance is influenced by these differences, individuals may feel more connected to a specific group while feeling disconnected from a united national identity (Haddad, 2020).

In Lebanon's past, elite sports groups have frequently been associated with political factions, community groups, and religious communities (Boukhater, 2004; Moroy, 1998; Nassif, 2013; Nassif & Amara, 2015; Nseir, 2012; Reiche, 2011). In his doctoral thesis on confessionalism and sports in Lebanon, George Nseir (2012) analyzed statistics of the management positions of the majority (32) of federations in 2008 and 2009. The results indicated that only seven federations (21 %) merged Muslims and Christians and have mixed leadership, constituting but one fifth of the total federations. Among the 34 federations in 2009, 24 federations (70%) were dominated by one confession, with ratios exceeding 70:30; this confessional overrepresentation is replicated on the field because athletes, referees, and coaches choose a sport that is run by members of their own community. For example, in football, among the 133 clubs registered with the federation, Muslims

account for 85% of total members. In table tennis, among the 22 clubs registered with the federation during the 2009–2010 season, Christians constitute 71% of total members. Nassif and Amara (2015) concluded that the political and sectarian structure of the nation directly influences the organization and policies of Lebanese sports. 80% of National Sports Federations (NSFs) are led by presidents and federations from the same sectarian background. They believe that the over-representation and influence of one religious community over a sport restricts the participation of players and fans from other communities.

The roles of National Sports Federations (NSFs) are crucial in influencing the arrangement and growth of sports organizations on a national scale. As NSFs seek legitimacy and efficiency, they frequently look to successful examples from other organizations, both within and outside the sports domain. This imitation process, referred to as mimetic isomorphism, frequently occurs in nonprofit sports organizations, where the urge to adhere to accepted norms is significant. By implementing the strategies of other sucessful entities, these organizations strive to improve their operations and achieve lasting success. Therefore, the management of NSFs is significantly linked to mimetic isomorphism, as they conform to dominant norms and trends in the sports community.

1.2 Topic 2: Mimetic Isomorphism in Non-Profit Associations

Many authors have tried to demonstrate how sports Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) are shifting toward reorganization as ‘non-profit companies’ from the viewpoint of professional associations. Mintzberg’s configurations have been attempted to be applied to sports organizations by others. Scholars who have established a connection between professionalization and skills have observed an improvement in training content and skills in sports, particularly among volunteer leaders (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021). Bernardeau-Moreau strives to clearly outline the shapes of isomorphism in sports. He suggests that professionalization is a larger trend impacting cultural,

sports, and social NPOs, as well as the broader social and solidarity economy. Neo-institutional theory conceptualizes this as institutional isomorphism. Research on isomorphism in sports includes studies by scholars such as Hinings, Slack and Thibault (1991), Meyer and Rowan (1997), O'Brien and Slack (2004), Hoye et al. (2006), Edwards et al. (2009), Stenling and Fahlén (2009), Vos et al. (2011), Dowling, Edwards and Washington (2014), Nagel et al. (2015), and Nichols et al. (2015) are referenced. In this article, the author wants to examine the types of isomorphism that are present in sports. This article shows how this process affects sports organizations, alters their social mission, and impacts their members.

Neo-institutional theorists believe that institutional isomorphism is a group's joint effort to adapt to external limitations placed on the organization. Hawley (1968) describes it as a tension-driven process that causes one group or organization to emulate another, more powerful, group or organization. In a landmark article released in 1983, DiMaggio and Powell outlined three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism. Coercive isomorphism occurs when organizations are pressured by formal and informal legal requirements, as well as accounting and bureaucratic demands, to mimic the structure and operations of larger and more influential organizations. Mimetic isomorphism in non-profit organizations leads them to mimic others due to uncertainty about the future and a need to survive. Organizations that are considered dominant have adjusted better to the current situation by emulating others in times of ambiguous goals or symbolic uncertainty in the environment. Finally, normative isomorphism describes a leading professional group that works to make the norms, access, and operational conditions of its professions more uniform and standardized. Ecological (Economic and political) factors impact social elements and drive transformation.

Bernardeau-Moreau's (2021) study examined the types of isomorphism in sports and how this process affects sports organizations, how it changes their social mission, and how it changes their members. The findings of the study pointed to two levels of interpretation. On a structural level, the research indicates that the organizations utilize management and operational techniques from the entrepreneurial model, while also creating plans to expand the organization's services and enhance its products through innovation. On a skills-oriented level, it seems that volunteers are utilizing the skills gained in their professional careers more often when working with non-profit organizations. The research findings of the article show that sports NPOs' isomorphism is marked by the necessity for autonomous financial support, a variety of activities, innovation pursuit, and heightened demand for skills from professional background.

Caillé (2003) states that the institutional isomorphism in the field of NPOs reflects the need for these organizations to find their own means of subsistence in order to limit their dependence on companies that compete and public authorities that withdraw. NPOs tend to use an entrepreneurial approach to management. However, this is done to increase their financial independence so they can deal with reductions in public subsidies and lessen the unpredictability of their operating environment. According to Enjolras (1995), a trend of institutional isomorphism emerges whenever non-profit organizations are placed in competition with for-profit organizations. Thus, from a group and institutional standpoint, institutional isomorphism represents a convergence of behaviors among organizations operating in the same industry that have similar target markets, goods, and services. Hoarau and Laville (2008) stated that this process of standardization motivates organizations to mimic successful structures and methods, like financing processes, product and service variety, and the implementation of innovation. NPOs, if financially able, strive to compete with companies by utilizing similar administrative and management tools, a concept known as

'competitive mimicry'. Engaging skilled volunteers who can adapt to changing demands also helps NPOs become more like the commercial sector. Numerous authors from both Europe and the United States of America have noted this trend. National surveys conducted in France show how important skills have become in the nonprofit sector (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021). Nearly 80% of volunteer leaders, according to Bazin et al. (2011), want to bolster or revitalize their management teams by offering skills. Most of them view initial or internal training as a crucial way to obtain access to responsibilities. According to Tchernonog and Prouteau (2019), the percentage of senior socio-professional categories (business leaders, senior managers, and self-employed professions) in non-profit organization presidencies have increased, indicating an increase in competence.

As previously stated, research on sports NPOs yields varying conclusions regarding isomorphism. From the standpoint of normative isomorphism, Hinings, Slack, and Thibault (1991) examined the professional development of sports organizations, while in the case of English rugby, O'Brien and Slack (2004) used the concept of mimetic isomorphism to describe how a hobby logic gives way to a professional logic. According to Hoye et al. (2006), the institutional isomorphism issue in sports non-profits is undeniable. Most sports organizations in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have administrative and management governance structures that are strikingly similar. Stenling and Fahlén (2009) attempted to show how the prevailing logics in this field have caused normative isomorphism in the institutional framework of the Swedish sports movement. In contrast, Vos et al. (2011) observed how the Flemish government instrumentalized sports groups by enforcing norms and operational procedures through coercive isomorphism. Regarding Stenling and Sam (2020), sports non-profits are subject to normative and mimetic isomorphic pressures as a result of professionalization.

According to Bernardeau-Moreau (2021), the analyses lead to the conclusion that the most appropriate framework for describing NPOs in France is mimetic isomorphism. This is due to at least two factors. The first reason is that since the 1990s, the government has adopted a more liberal and decentralized approach, giving management and support in the non-profit sector to territorial authorities (departments and municipalities) and sports federations (federations have authority because they perform a public service function). A contractualisation strategy adheres to government guidelines for the interactions between local public actors and NPOs (as well as businesses that invest in the social and public spheres). The latter continually seek to assign the management of their public service to the most efficient service providers. In addition to being non-profit, these service providers are, above all, entrepreneurial; this is especially true when it comes to the management of sporting facilities like swimming pools, recreation centers, and sports complexes. As a result, there is a great deal of ambiguity, which interferes with sports NPOs' typical functions. The first justification leads to the second. Uncertainty about the future or even the existence of non-profit organizations in this more open and competitive field drives them to copy other, more established organizations (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021). This isomorphism primarily happens within the realm of organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) stated that the field would only exist if it is defined and set up by specialized organizations that regulate, coordinate, and standardize it. Sports NPOs are adopting administrative and management practices from commercial sports organizations to improve profitability, utilizing software and communication resources to engage participants and consumers, and hiring staff with skills in management, administration, accounting, and IT from the professional sector. Researchers such as Hawley (1968) show that addressing continual and rapidly accelerating changes requires organizations to adapt to their environment, often by adhering to current trends and imitating the most successful competitors in

the industry. Therefore, isomorphism occurs when organizations adjust their structure and operating model to resemble larger, more influential organizations in the same field due to legal, accounting, bureaucratic, and administrative pressures.

Volunteers have emerged as a crucial pool of human resources across various sectors within society. Specifically, the sports industry depends significantly on volunteers since many people are usually required to develop and provide sports services. Cuskelly et al. (1998) noted that volunteers often exhibit a deeper commitment to organizations in a positive way, as their services are largely value-driven and less transactional than hose of paid staff. Another advantage is that, since volunteers are not dependent on the organization or its managers for their income, they can provide valuable criticism and honest feedback to managers. In sports, many volunteers play a crucial role in organizing and supporting sporting events. For instance, numerous university sports departments benefit from the assistance of volunteer ushers on game days (Chelladurai, 1999). During major sporting events like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, organizing committees enlist a vast number of volunteers to assist athletes, guests, and fans by working in multiple functional areas, including sports, medical services, technology, environment, ceremonies, spectator assistance, and administration. Additionally, financial advantages should not be overlooked as a benefit to the organization. Taking into account the significant number of volunteers involved in different sporting events, it is evident that the economic value of volunteers plays a crucial role in supporting sporting event organizations (Bang & Ross, 2009). The reasons for volunteering have been extensively studied in psychology (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). The functional perspective indicates that volunteers are motivated by different psychological functions, including the expression of values such as humanitarianism, acquiring knowledge, and applying underutilized skills (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Self-Determination Theory

(Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a framework for comprehending various forms of motivation, from intrinsic motivation (the most self-directed type) to extrinsic motivation and amotivation. Volunteers with intrinsic motivation enjoy the activity for its own sake, while identified regulation represents extrinsic motivation that corresponds with personal objectives (Bidee et al., 2013; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are both types of autonomous motivation. In comparison, introjected regulation entails behaving to prevent feelings of guilt or anxiety, whereas external regulation pertains to actions driven by outside demands or incentives. These types of motivation are regulated since they arise from the pressure to participate in the activity (Deci et al., 2017). Volunteers are vital to the achievements of numerous sports organizations and events (Cuskelly, 1998; Green & Chalip, 1998; Shilbury & Moore, 2006). Studies have explored the importance of volunteers in community sports (Silverberg et al., 2001) and in major international events like the Olympics or FIFA World Cup (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003; Bang et al., 2009). No matter the location, a distinguishing factor that sets sport volunteer motivation apart from other volunteering options is an individual's 'passion for sport' (Bang & Ross, 2009). For instance, in research involving marathon volunteers, motivations for volunteering were primarily influenced by the sport itself rather than merely the chance to assist others (Bang & Ross, 2009). At a professional golf tournament, passion for golf was the main driving force for volunteers (Coyne & Coyne, 2001), while enthusiasm for tennis drew volunteers to a U.S. Open Series event (Pauline & Pauline, 2009), and Bang and Chelladurai (2003) noted that 'love of sport' inspired volunteers for the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Cuskelly (2004) found that athletes and former athletes from different sports tended to volunteer in order to remain connected to their sport.

As Coyne and Coyne (2001) further explained, this phenomenon, labeled leisure motivation, refers to the need for relaxation and recreation. This indicates that individuals may feel inspired to volunteer at a World Cup due to their passion for football, or to help at a track and field world championship because they admire Usain Bolt. Additionally, they may serve as volunteers at the Olympic Games due to their genuine interest in the event. Leisure motivation is an essential driver and important element for volunteers involved in sports events, as it stems from their passion for sports, enjoyment, and diverse interests. Volunteers may also be motivated by a desire to enhance educational opportunities for others, as well as to promote civic involvement and social interaction (Forbes & Zampelli, 2012). For example, research on volunteerism in youth sports shows that volunteers are motivated by the goal of providing an excellent sporting experience for children (Kim, Zhang, & Connaughton, 2010).

1.2.1 Political Influence of France on Lebanon

French engagement in Lebanon dates back to the nineteenth century, when, during the Ottoman period, Emperor Napoleon III dispatched 6,000 troops to restore peace, assist Christians, and contribute to the recovery of Mount Lebanon. In the early twentieth century, France planned a direct military conquest of Mount Lebanon to establish a 'mini France, free, productive, and loyal'. Nonetheless, the French saw their missionary and educational efforts as a complementary asset in their struggle with the British (Geukjian, 2023). Immediately after British and French troops arrived in Beirut in October 1918, Colonel Piepape of France declared the preservation and improvement of the educational system, as well as the replacement of Turkish with French as the primary language for teaching alongside Arabic (Long, 2011). France's desire to divide and dominate Syria was a major factor in the 1920 formation of Greater Lebanon. Among these features, Lebanon's boundaries are undoubtedly the most evident. The borders of Lebanon were largely

established by the French, and were not based on any particular physical or historical distinction. The French established the 'State of Greater Lebanon' in September 1920 (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2012). At the end of 1921, the number of government schools managed by the French had almost doubled to 279, and by 1922, in Syria and Lebanon combined, there were 30,145 students in 461 schools as stated by the High Commission (Long, 2011). Greater Lebanon changed its name to the Lebanese Republic in May 1926. In addition to designating French as an official language alongside Arabic, the constitution also specified the tricolor French flag, with a cedar in the white band. Undoubtedly, the local politics, business, and culture were impacted by the French mandate authorities. Recognition of Lebanon as an independent nation and acceptance of Lebanese nationality across all sects increased during the 1930s and 1940s. Salibi stated that in the forties, the majority of Lebanese stopped identifying themselves as Syrians (Salibi, 1989). The French Mandate remained in effect until the outbreak of World War II. Lebanon remained under French control until 1943, when it gained independence during World War II. The National Pact of 1943, establishing the tradition of sharing political roles among various communities, was an informal understanding between Sunni and Maronite leaders, communicated through speeches and interviews as an agreement reached by both parties. With the Pact, seats were distributed based on the 1932 census data for group sizes, and Lebanon was declared an independent Arab nation (Hourani, 1988; Cleveland, 1994).

1.2.2 Influence of France on Lebanon in Sports

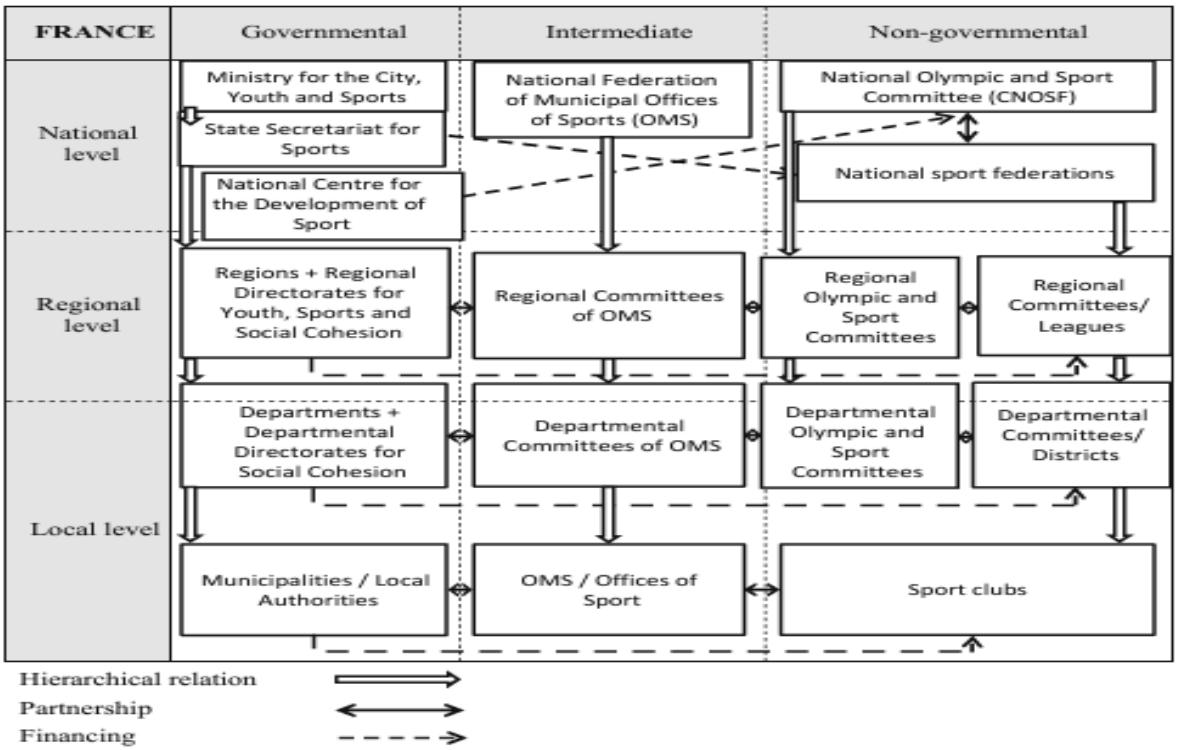
Sports in Lebanon only partially follow the European model, stemming from French colonization. Similar to what was happening in French colonies, football was the first sport introduced in the country. In 1933, the Lebanese Football Federation was created, and in 1935, it became a member of FIFA. It was mainly between 1943 and 1948 that most sports federations were created,

some of which included multiple sports. The Lebanese Olympic Committee was established in 1948, and Lebanon participated in the 1948 Winter Games in St. Moritz, as well as the Summer Games in London. In 1952, Lebanon took part in the Winter Games in Oslo and the Summer Games in Helsinki. Similarly, it participated in the first and second Mediterranean Games in 1951 in Alexandria and 1953 in Barcelona. In 1953, it also participated in the first Pan-Arab games in Alexandria (Blanc, 2004). There is a hierarchical pyramid structure in which the main federations in Lebanon are connected to European and international federations such as FIFA and FIBA. Indeed, they are the guardians of sporting values and rules, and the sporting spirit in general. They must ensure the national adherence to these rules and international sporting values. This hierarchical pyramid organization consists of five levels, of international sport, which links Lebanese and European federations together. The first level is international (such as FIFA), the second is continental (UEFA, AFC), the third is national (French Football Federation (FFF), Lebanese Football Association (LFA)), the fourth is occupied by regional football leagues, and lastly the local level. Clubs form the base of this pyramid; they are generally linked to federations, following sporting practice (Rahal, 2017). In examining isomorphism within sports associations, this analysis explores how the concept applies to the sports structures of France and Lebanon. Based on the identified characteristics of each country's sports system, two tables were developed to illustrate their similarities and differences. This comparative approach enables a clearer assessment of whether isomorphic patterns are present in the sports structures of the two countries.

1.2.3 Organization of Sport in France

1.2.3.1 Governmental Actors. In 2015, the Ministry of the City, Youth, and Sports along with the State Secretariat for Sports were the primary sports bodies within the government sector in France.

Figure 1: *The Organization of Sport in France in 2015*



Note. Adapted from 'France: Organisation of Sport and Policy Towards Sport Federations', by N. Scelles, 2017, in *Sport Policy Systems and Sport Federations*: *A Cross-national Perspective* (pp. 135–155), Palgrave Macmillan.

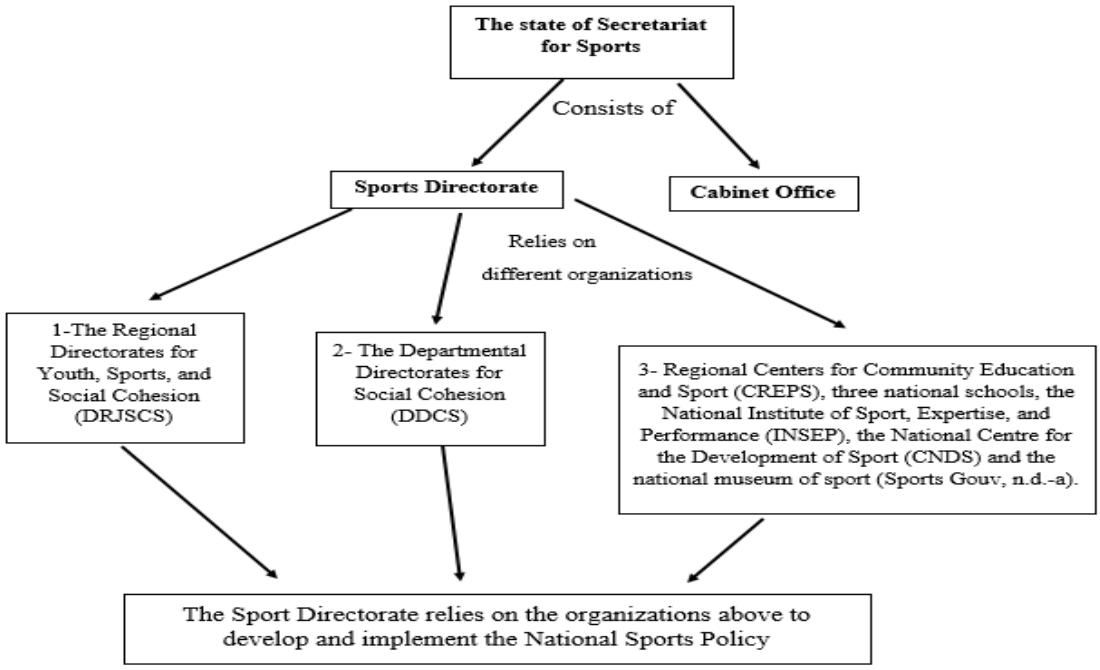
The second governmental actor is the State Secretariat for Sports, which comprises a Cabinet Office and a Sports Directorate. The latter develops and executes the national sports policy (Scelles, 2017). To achieve this, it depends on various organizations, such as:

• the Regional Offices for Youth, Sports, and Social Unity (DRJSCS);

• the Regional Directorates for Social Cohesion (DRCS);

• the Ministry's institutions: 17 Regional Centers for Community Education and Sport (CREPS), three national schools, the National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance (INSEP), the National Center for the Development of Sport (CNDS), and the National Sports Museum.

Figure 2: *The Structure of the State Secretariat for Sports in France*



Note. Adapted from 'France: Organisation of Sport and Policy Towards Sport Federations', by N. Scelles, 2017, in *Sport Policy Systems and Sport Federations: A Cross-national Perspective* (pp. 135–155), Palgrave Macmillan.

The responsibilities of the State Secretariat for Sports include supporting high-level sports; establishing a legal framework and ensuring the governance of sports; advocating for 'Sport for All'; safeguarding athletes and addressing social issues like violence and doping; executing regional sports planning while incorporating sustainable development in sporting policies; and enhancing France's global presence in sports during significant international competitions and within global sporting bodies (Eurostrategies, 2011).

The third and last governmental actor is the National Centre for the Development of Sport (CNDS), a government-owned institution functioning under the oversight of the State Secretariat for Sports. Its goals are to support the development of 'Sport for All', to enhance access to elite sports and the coordination of sporting events (such as the 2016 UEFA European Championships); to advocate for health and wellness through sports; to enhance safety in sporting activities while safeguarding athletes; and to bolster the oversight of sports activities (Scelles, 2017).

1.2.3.2 Intermediate Actors. The Offices of Sport are organizations that can be local, intercommunity, or regional. Currently, there are 1,200 Offices of Sport in France, assisting 7,500 municipalities and serving approximately 40,000 sports associations and 30 million individual members (Scelles, 2017). The mission of the Offices of Sport is to promote coordination among stakeholders in their region, assist local sports associations in their daily operations, and enhance the development of resources and skills within sports associations in their area (Scelles, 2017).

1.2.3.3 Non-Governmental Actors. The French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF) is the acknowledged non-governmental, umbrella organization for sports in France. It includes 95 of the 117 National Sports Federations and approximately 180,000 sport associations. The CNOSF includes Regional Olympic and Sports Committees, Departmental Olympic and Sports Committees, and Departmental Committees functioning at different levels, all of which report to the CNOSF (Scelles, 2017). Eurostrategies (2011) points out that the CNOSF's missions involve representing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in France; advocating for French sport in discussions with public authorities and various organizations; ensuring adherence to the regulations governing Olympic sports; and offering support and services to its member federations. Regarding this mission, the CNOSF engages in various domains: professionalization of sports (employment growth); recognition and enhancement of volunteering; training for managers, staff,

and technical executives; spatial organization; advancement of female and male athletes; health promotion through sports; and dispute resolution in sports through mediation or arbitration (Scelles, 2017).

1.2.3.4 National Sports Federations in France. Every NSF is an organization that manages and encourages participation in its specific sport discipline. In France, sports federations are overseen by the Ministry of Sports, with the exception of school and university federations, which fall under the Ministry of Education (Scelles, 2017).

1.2.3.5 Relationship Between Sports Federations and the Government. The connection between the sports federations or confederations and the governmental authority can be analyzed using the principal–agent model, where the government assumes the role of principal and the sports federations or confederations function as the agent. The Ministry of Sports offers financial assistance and human resources to sports federations. Financial assistance is based on established goals (Cour des Comptes, 2013). French sports federations may receive government assistance if they implement statutes that meet the government's criteria, including a disciplinary regulation aligned with a model regulation and an anti-doping disciplinary regulation. The connection between the government and the sports federations is governed by their established strategic goals. These strategic aims are connected to the Program 'Sport' and consequently the national sports policy. They may occur annually or over multiple years (four years = one Olympiad). In 2011, it is important to highlight that 73.8 percent of the subsidies given by the Ministry to sports federations were aimed at the advancement of elite sport (action 2 in Program 'Sport'). An additional 4.2 percent was allocated for the medical prevention of elite female and male athletes and competitors (action 3 in Program 'Sport') (Cour des Comptes, 2013). This indicates that 78 percent of the subsidies for strategic goals were directed towards elite sports, aligning with the notion that the aim to

achieve international medals, established in the 1960s, remains a key aspect of the connection between the government and sports federations.

1.2.3.6 Legislative Framework. In 2004, the Ministry of Sports participated in a world-wide governmental initiative focused on enhancing citizens' access to legal resources. This resulted in the Code of Sport through the Ordinance of May 23, 2006, for its legislative component and Decrees of July 24, 2007, for its regulatory aspect. The Code of Sport is primarily founded on earlier sporting laws. A significant document is Law No. 84-610 dated July 16, 1984, referred to as 'Loi Avice', which emphasizes the public service aim of recognized sports federations (Eurostrategies, 2011). As highlighted by Bayle (2005), this clearly indicates that sports fall under the jurisdiction of the government. The 'Loi Avice' further mandates a clear 'contractualisation' between the government and the CNOSF, bolstering the latter's legitimacy (Lavaure et al., 2013). In accordance with this, Eurostrategies (2011) states: 'The 1984 Law and later documents, especially Law No. 2000-627 from July 6, 2000, known as the 'Loi Buffet', define the status and function of sports federations and sports clubs within the framework of the National French Olympic and Sport Committee. The 'Loi Buffet' further strengthens the concept of solidarity between the elite and grassroots sectors of sport. 'The law 'Loi Buffet' creates the so-called 'Buffet tax' (Article 302(a) of the General Tax Code), which imposes a mandatory levy of 5% on revenue from broadcast rights', according to Eurostrategies (2011). The CNDS receives the income. Local sports clubs are mostly funded by the CNDS (Ho-Ta-Khanh, 2015). 'Articles R132-16 and R132-17 stipulate that the financial provisions are the subject of a protocol approved by the Minister in charge of sport', according to Eurostrategies (2011), which also defines the relationships between professional leagues and federations.

Sport federations are notably included in the Code of Sport between Articles L131-1 and L131-21 (and R131-1 to R131-45). Sports federations' independence from the government and their ability to function independently in accordance with their own authorized laws are both confirmed by Article L131-1. According to France Olympique (n.d.), the Code of Sport makes a distinction between federations that are only recognized by the government (Articles L131-8 to L131-13) and those that are delegated for public service (Articles L131-14 to L131-21):

1. To be recognized, federations need to establish statutes that meet the criteria outlined by the government, including disciplinary regulations based on a model regulation and another concerning anti-doping. The acknowledgment of these measures enables the sports federations to qualify for governmental assistance, encompassing both financial and human resources.
2. Delegated federations are tasked with fulfilling a public service responsibility assigned by the government. In this context, they hold a monopoly, specifically in organizing competitions for international, national, regional, and departmental titles, as well as conducting the necessary selections.

1.2.3.7 Policy Framework. France's sport policy is based on two principles: the government's delegation of sport management to sport organizations and solidarity between professional and grassroots sports within sports federations (Vie Publique, 2008). Although the independence of sports organizations in France is acknowledged, it is crucial to remember that the government wields substantial power over sports policy. Sports federations are motivated financially to adhere to the sports policy that aligns with the 'Sport' Program and are also dependent on resources offered by the National Centre for the Development of Sport (CNDS) (République Française, 2014). Following the Institutional Act on Financial Legislation (LOLF) of August 1, 2001, which sought to restructure the French government, the 'Sport' program was put into place in 2005 (Nikonoff &

Bayle, 2007). Its four unique actions— (1) promoting grassroots sport, (2) developing elite sport, (3) preventing through sport and protecting sportswomen and men, and (4) promoting careers in sport—all reflect its strategic orientations. Additionally, 1,680 Sport Technical Advisors (CTS) are funded by the government and assigned to 77 national federations. Technical advisors fall into four different categories: Regional Technical Advisor (CTR, 39 percent), National Technical Advisor (CTN, 36 percent), National Technical Director (DTN, 4 percent), and National Trainer (EN, 21 percent).

Each of these positions has distinct duties under this category: National Technical Directors participate in the formulation of federal sport policy, oversee its execution, and help assess it. French team members are supervised by National Trainers, who also help federations' finest athletes get involved. At the national and regional levels, National Technical Advisors conduct observations and analyses of athletes and sportswomen and offer guidance and expertise. They also oversee the creation, planning, and training of the federation's athletic programs. Lastly, at the regional level, Regional Technical Advisors perform duties akin to those of National Technical Advisors.

1.2.3.8 Financial Framework. (in Terms of Funding from the Government). In 2023, the budget for the Ministry of Sports and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (MSJOP) reached a record high, totaling €1.113 billion, which includes €818.3 million allocated to public sports policies unrelated to the Olympic and Paralympic Games (OPG)—a rise of 2.6% from 2022—alongside €295 million specifically set aside for the preparation and organization of the Paris 2024 OPG (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques (MSJOP), 2022).

For the non-OPG segment, the budget provides for the ongoing Pass'Sport initiative with a funding of €100 million, targeting over two million young people, including scholarship recipients and persons with disabilities, to reduce sports club membership fees. An additional €100 million is allocated for the local sports facilities initiative, aiming to build 5,000 facilities by 2024 in underserved regions, thereby encouraging participation in emerging activities like 3x3 basketball, padel, or climbing. Moreover, €4 million is allocated to complete the nationwide network of Maisons Sport-Santé (MSS), key components of the national sport-health strategy.

Additionally, the primary budget of the National Sports Agency (ANS) is boosted by €10 million to promote the professional development of regional sports organizations, while €0.5 million is designated for the École des cadres to train sports technical advisors. The sovereign (régalien) aspect is bolstered by establishing 20 more roles in decentralized services aimed at combating sexual and gender-based violence and radicalization, with an extra €3 million allocated to assist in hosting significant international sporting events, including e-sport contests.

In terms of high performance, the Ambition Blue program aids 480 athletes with significant medal potential and their coaches, amidt expectations that the French delegation will surpass 650 athletes at Paris 2024, up from 520 in Tokyo 2021. Moreover, a nationwide initiative for accessible ticketing with a budget of €11 million (which includes €5.5 million in 2023) will enable the acquisition of over 400,000 tickets for priority groups such as youth, volunteers, individuals with disabilities, and government officials participating.

Ultimately, concerning the OPG, most of the €295 million is allocated to SOLIDEO (€270 million), which is responsible for providing lasting facilities and infrastructure like the Olympic villages and the Olympic Aquatic Center, whereas the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee (COJOP)

is allocated €25 million in 2023, as part of a broader state commitment of €80 million for organizing the Paralympic Games. It is important to highlight that the COJOP budget is composed of over 97% private funding (IOC broadcasting rights, ticket sales, hospitality, and sponsorships), with government contribution from the State, City of Paris, and Île-de-France Region limited to the segment dedicated to the Paralympic Games.

Each of these actions exemplifies a financial strategy that is both bold and disciplined, seeking to establish France as a genuine "sporting nation" while maintaining a balance between growth in participation, excellence in sports, and fiscal responsibility (MSJOP, 2022).

1.2.3.9 MSJVA in France. The Ministère des Sports, de la Jeunesse et de la Vie associative's (MSJVA) main mission is to implement the government's policy regarding the promotion and organization of physical and sports activities, supporting young people's paths to autonomy, and the development of community life. More specifically, in the field of sports, the ministry's commitment is reflected in the development of sports for all, especially targeting audiences who are the farthest from sports practice, and in supporting high-level sports to promote high performance (Le ministère des Sports, de la Jeunesse et de la Vie associative, n.d.).

According to the MSJVA website, the cabinet of the Minister of Sports, Youth, and Associative Life is composed of the following members:

Table 2: *Hierarchy of the MSJVA*

1. Minister			
2. Chief of Staff	3. Deputy Chief of Staff in Charge of Budgetary Affairs	4. Deputy Chief of Staff in Charge of the Legacy of the Games	5. Cabinet Director

6. Deputy Cabinet Director in Charge of Relations with Elected Officials	7. Speech Advisor in Charge of the Legacy of the Games	8. Communication and Press Advisor	9. Digital Communication Advisor
10. Parliamentary Advisor	11. Advisor in Charge of Youth, Engagement and Associative Life	12. Advisor in Charge of Ethics, Integrity, Combating Violence and Secularism	13. Advisor in Charge of Relations with the Economic World
14. Advisor in Charge of High Performance, Para-sport and Sports Networks	15. Professional Sports and Major Sports Events Advisor	16. Territorial action, Promotion of Women's Sports and Overseas Advisor	17. Mission Manager for Sports and High Performance
18. Mission Manager for Communication and Press		19. Mission Manager for Youth and Sports	

Note. Adapted from the Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Associative Life website.

1.2.4 Organization of Sports in Lebanon

Sports in Lebanon are managed and controlled by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon; its main mission is to cooperate and collaborate with the Lebanese Olympic Committee as well as with the youth, scouting, and sports associations (LMYS, 2024). Regarding sports governance in Lebanon, after the conclusion of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, the Directorate of Youth and Sports, which operated under the Lebanese Ministry of Education, took control of overseeing the sports system in Lebanon (Nassif, 2017). In the year 2000, the Directorate of Youth and

Sports was changed to the Ministry of Youth and Sports by the signing of Decree No. 247. In addition, the latest Decree No. 4481 was issued in 2016 concerning the sports structure in Lebanon. It provides the Ministry of Youth and Sports full authority over the NSFs and mandates collaboration with the Lebanese Olympic Committee. However, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is responsible for school sports. As for the non-governmental actors, the Lebanese Olympic Committee was established in Lebanon as an independent sports organizing body through National Decree No. 1350, dated December 28, 1946. One of the main goals of the Lebanese Olympic Committee is to promote the Olympic movement and its principles throughout Lebanon. The function of the Lebanese Olympic Committee at the local level is to encourage and advance sports at all levels, create sports cultural programs, and integrate them into the physical education curricula used in schools, colleges, and universities. The function of the Olympic Committee at the global level is as follows: The Lebanese Olympic Committee commits to competing in the Winter and Summer Olympic Games, along with world, continental, and regional multi-sport events under the sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee, by dispatching delegations consisting of athletes and officials (Lebanese Olympic Committee, 2024).

1.2.4.1 Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon. Starting with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon, according to the LMYS website, Decree No. 16680 was issued in 2006 to organize the General Institution of Sports, Scouting, and Youth Facilities, implementing the hierarchy of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon. The LMYS hierarchy is headed by the Minister, with the general secretary under the Minister, followed by the General Directorate of Youth and Sports that oversees youth and sports affairs in its various bodies, including associations, clubs, and unions, as well as outdoor activities, scouting, opportunity camps, and voluntary work camps, including youth, scouting, and sports missions both locally and internationally. It is

also responsible for health supervision and oversight of institutions, training centers, programs, and curricula associated with it.

Figure 3: *Hierarchy of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports*



Note. Adapted from the Ministry of Youth and Sports website (2024).

The General Directorate of Youth and Sports is composed of 6 aspects: the regional departments, the Strategy, Planning & Information Operations services, the Department of Sports Medicine and Health Counseling, the Youth department, the Sports Department, and the Cabinet department. Each of these six aspects is composed of several other features that are responsible for the tasks and powers assigned to them by laws and regulations. Following an interview with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat to better comprehend the structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon, it became clear that most of these appointments are made by the Minister due to political

influence and religious connections. Significantly, several positions in the Youth and Sports Departments in the LMYS are obtained through this flawed process, as are roles in the Information Operations Services within the Strategy, Planning, and Information Operations division. These practices raise notable concerns about the legality and integrity of appointments within the ministry (personal communication with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat, 2025). Additionally, after conducting an interview with Mr. Jihad Salameh to gain a better understanding of the structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, he stated that 40% of the positions are vacant. The other 60% consists of 30% contractual and 30% permanent employees. These employees (60%) have been performing their functions and gradually improving over the last few years up to now. He further added that the minister is illegally assigning people. He explained that first-category employees should be appointed by a resolution from the Council of Ministers; instead, they are being assigned by the minister to fill the vacancies without considering the Council of Ministers' resolutions. For example, the general directors of the six main departments (Regional Department, Strategy/Planning & Information Operations Services, Department of Sports Medicine & Health Counseling, Youth Department, Sports Department, and the Cabinet Department) of the Ministry are being assigned by the minister illegally (they should have been appointed by a resolution from the Council of Ministers). Additionally, Mr. Salameh insisted that there are empty positions throughout the six departments mentioned above. To legally fill the vacancies, if there is a vacant position, the employee with the most years of service and the highest rank should take that specific position, which is not the case in this ministry (personal communication with Mr. Jihad Salameh, 2025).

In conclusion, the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon and the Ministry of Sports in France share many similarities in their organizational structure. Both are headed by a Minister responsible for national sports policy who emphasizes physical activity, youth development, and

international representation. In addition, both ministries have specialized departments or directorates responsible for executing policies and overseeing sports infrastructure and initiatives under these ministers. Although there are slight variations in organizational structures in different countries because of political and cultural factors, the main purpose of both ministries is consistent: to facilitate and encourage sports at a national level. Furthermore, the two ministries collaborate closely with NSFs and local authorities to guarantee that sports programs are easily accessible and well-coordinated nationwide. However, despite pointing out the similarities, it is evident that the positions in the structure of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports are assigned illegally by the minister, along with 40% of empty positions, suggesting that the Lebanese sports structure is dysfunctional. Despite the similarities shown between the two ministries, the tables below address the similarities and differences between the sports structures in France and Lebanon.

1.2.5 Similarities and Differences Between the Organization of Sports in France and Lebanon

This section analyzes the similarities and differences between the sports structures in France and Lebanon with a focus on key aspects such as governance, governing bodies, and the role of the Ministry of Sports in each country.

Table 3: *Similarities in Sports Organization: A Comparative Analysis of France and Lebanon*

Organization of Sports / **Variables**	**Organization of Sports in Lebanon**	**Organization of Sports in France**

Similarities	Configuration of the sports structure	Hierarchical pyramid structure	
	Affiliation	Government	
	Existence of Ministry of Sports	Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS) 	Ministère des Sports, de la Jeunesse et de la Vie associative (MSJVA) 
	Mission of the Ministry of Sports	Implement the government's policy regarding the promotion and organization of physical and sports activities.	
	Non-Governmental Actors	Lebanese Olympic Committee (LOC)	French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF)
	Sports schools	Under the supervision of the Ministry of Education	
	Legislations	All the sports legislations are accredited from the government through Law, Decrees, Resolutions, and Articles for example: -France: Law No. 84-610 created 'Loi Avice'/ Law No. 2000-627 from July 6, 2000, known as the 'Loi Buffet' -Lebanon: Decree No. 4481 issued in 2016	

The sports structures in both France and Lebanon exhibit numerous similarities, mainly in their structured pyramidal hierarchy. Both systems are managed and supervised by the government, with each country possessing a Ministry of Sports that focuses on regulating and overseeing

sports activities. Furthermore, both structures include non-governmental actors, such as the Lebanese Olympic Committee (LOC) and the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF), playing an instrumental role in the sports organizations of both countries. In both countries, school sports are overseen by the Ministry of Education, highlighting the ministry's role in promoting sports development. Moreover, sports legislation in both nations is issued by the government, with all relevant laws, decrees, resolutions, and articles accredited through official governmental channels. These similarities emphasize the centralized, government-led character of sports in both France and Lebanon.

Although the sports frameworks in France and Lebanon share similarities, there are several significant distinctions.

Table 4: *Differences Between the Organization of Sports in France and Lebanon*

	Organization of Sports / **Variables**	**Organization of Sports in Lebanon**	**Organization of Sports in France**
Differences	The primary sports bodies within the government	Ministry of Youth and Sports	-Ministry of Sports -State Secretariat for Sports
	University sports and its federation	University sports and the FSUL fall under the umbrella of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.	University sports and the FFSU fall under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education.

	Structure of the Ministry of Sports	The Ministry of Youth and Sports in Lebanon consists of six departments.	The Ministry of Sports in France is composed of advisors, managers, and a Deputy Chief of Staff.
	The existence of sports bodies in France's sports structure and their absence in Lebanon's sports system	-Governmental Actors: State Secretariat for Sports and the National Centre for the Development of Sport (CNDS) -Intermediate Actors: National Federation of Municipal Offices of Sports (OMS) and specifically the Offices of Sports -Sports Technical Advisors (CTS): Regional Technical Advisor, National Technical Advisor, National Technical Director, and National Trainers	

In France, two primary authorities manage sports, whereas Lebanon has a single governing body. Another difference lies in the oversight of university sports: in Lebanon, university sports and their federation are managed by the Ministry of Sports, while in France, they come under the Ministry of Education. However, the biggest difference lies in the structure of the Ministry of Sports in both countries. While the Ministry of Sports in Lebanon consists of six departments, the Ministry of Sports in France is composed of advisors, managers, and a Deputy Chief of Staff. Moreover, there is a significant difference in the sports structures between the two nations, with the existence of numerous governing bodies in the French system compared to those in Lebanon, as shown in the table above. The similarities between the Lebanese and French sports structures are merely formal. However, a deeper analysis of the organization of sports in France shows that the existence of a much larger

number of structures at the regional level completely changes the functioning modes of both systems.

As the discussion progresses into the subject of mimetic isomorphism in non-profit organizations, it becomes clear that comparable processes of mimicking and adaptation may be observed in sports organizations. However, the sociology of sports organizations provides a unique lens through which to evaluate not just how these organizations imitate others, but also how they evolve through the process of professionalization. This shift from unstructured, volunteer-driven institutions to formal, professionalized entities illustrates the dynamics of legitimacy, resource acquisition, and organizational transformation in the sports industry, which mirror broader trends in organizational sociology.

1.3 Topic 3: Sociology of Sports Organizations

The sociology of sports organizations has been a field of study in France for almost 40 years (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021). Compared to other areas of sociology, such as the sociology of organizations, which has its roots in the seminal writings of Max Weber (1965) and Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) from the late 19th century, it is a comparatively recent field. The professionalization of this long-established, heavily institutionalized, and state-run industry occurs at the same time as this development (Gasparini, 2000). This area of sociology developed through different stages with the emergence of key theories in the field of organizational sociology, such as the principles originating from France, known as the French school of the sociology of organizations by Erhard Friedberg (Friedberg, 1993). Notable contributions include Crozier and Friedberg's strategic analysis (1977), Renaud Sainsaulieu's identity approach (1987), Philippe d'Iribane's honor reasoning (1989), Boltanski and Thévenot's theory of conventions (1991), Henri Amblard et al.'s theory of the logic of action (1996), Jean Reynaud's theory of social regulation

(1997–1999), and Akrich, Callon, and Latour's actor-network theory (2006). The works by Gasparini (2003), Bernardeau-Moreau (2004), and Barget and Vailleau (2008) have been particularly well-received in sports organizations, reflecting the shifts in the industry over the past few decades noted as the 'third era' by Jean-Paul Callède (1988). Even though sport sociology was acknowledged as an academic discipline in the late 1800s (Callède, 2007), it gained momentum in the 1960s, leading to the development of specific research areas (Callède, 2010), spearheaded by influential writers such as Bouet (1968), Dumazedier (1972), Magnane (1964), and Meynaud (1966).

Over the years, there has been a significant increase in quantitative data on French practices, with the addition of various influences such as Bourdieusian (Gasparini, 1996; Pociello, 1999), Boudonian (Mayaux, 1996; Chifflet, 1987), and even Marxist (Brohm, 1976). During the 1980s, research began to investigate the logical progressions of concern and democratic breakdown within sports entities (Yerles, 1984; Malenfant, 1988). In the 1990s, professionalization in sports began focusing on sociology and management, stemming from the connections between volunteers, employees, and non-profit organizations, particularly federal ones (Moingeon, 1991; Loret, 1995; Bayle, 1999). In the early 2000s, the establishment of permanent structures allowed for the solid foundation of sports organizations' sociology within the well-established French scientific community, leading to the publication of a dedicated work by Gasparini in 2000 (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. In the realm of sports sciences, the sociology of sports organizations has gained recognition alongside the sociology of work and management sciences, despite its slow growth (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. In the early 1980s, two key sources emerged that shaped the theoretical foundations of sports organization studies, as discussed by Barget and Vailleau (2008): a management source in Loret's (1995) publication on sport and management, and a sociological source in Ramanantsoa and Thiéry-Baslé's (1989) publication on sports federations. Thanks to the

contributions of these researchers, the field of the sociology of sports organizations has advanced in three main areas. On one side, a sociological perspective on interest groups considers the power dynamics and changes in organizational structures involving both volunteers and staff. On the other side, the reconfiguration of power dynamics may lead to a shift towards a political focus on governing styles and strategies employed by both public and private entities to maintain stability in these updated social dynamics. In the end, looking at things from a broader sociological and evolutionary perspective, the author argues that contingency theories offer insights into how sports organizations adapt to a changing environment by modeling their life cycles and steps of development (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**.

The researchers are slowly evaluating the impact of professionalization, which, even though it is just starting in most sports organizations, has the potential to bring about lasting changes in the internal power relationships between volunteers and employees, as well as between amateurs and professionals (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. Building on Crozier and Friedberg's (1977) and Philippe Bernoux's (1985) research in organizational sociology, Chifflet (1987) examined the dynamics of power within sports federations and their decision-making processes. He categorized organizational culture into three types: an elected party's voluntary culture with a federal mindset, state-provided public service culture, and manager and expert-driven performance and profitability culture (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021). Chantelat (2001) observed that conflicts among managers can stem from clashes between traditional, selfless amateur culture and the new managers' managerial approaches. Throughout his study on tennis and equestrian sports federations, Bernardeau-Moreau (2004) examined the French Federation for Equestrian Sports (Fédération Française d'Equitation) and proposed a life cycle model with a concluding phase focused on

professional structuring, emphasizing decentralization for increased independence at the grass-roots level rather than at the top. The author noted emerging professionalization trends in the operations of major organizations, where volunteer managers known as 'professional volunteers' with established skills tend to exclude less experienced volunteers. The power dynamics between volunteer managers and employees, as well as the relationships of authority, can also be found in local organizations, although they may be less prominent and spread out. In this case, conflicts are frequently caused by the simplification of job procedures, leading to uncertainty about the future of volunteer work (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. According to Malenfant (1988), the emergence of a new, more professional type of volunteer in sports organizations is changing the ways in which work is being done, leading to a renewal of sociability in sports. Viallon and Chantelat (2001) examined the entrepreneurial activities of the Grenoble University Club (GUC) and concluded that the new ways of working involve task specialization, divisional structuring, obtaining different sources of funding, and rationalizing skill requirements. Jacques Ion (2001) observed in his study of athletic clubs a contrast between the clubs' emphasis on a sense of community and their emphasis on achieving the best results through specialized skills.

Nevertheless, despite the various effects on organizations and structures, Walter and Falcoz (2007) demonstrated that the professionalization of associations does not eliminate the initial values of altruism and generosity embraced by volunteers. Despite facing challenges from professionalization and higher employee qualifications, the authors argue that volunteer work will persist and remain a fundamental aspect of the non-profit organization's identity. Within the same field, Bernardeau-Moreau et al. (2012) examined the compromises and arrangements proposed by private managers of public swimming pools based on Boltanski and Thévenot's (1991) conventions. The authors studied how managers seek to reach a compromise with their employees in times of

crisis by prioritizing the common good of a commercial public service that bridges the gap between the private sector's business world and the public sector's civil society. The researchers utilized theories from the sociology of organizations, such as strategic analysis, social regulation theory, and convention theory, to understand the evolutions and transformations of sports organizations. They have found repeating components that explain phenomena. Power struggles and disputes over territory often result in clashes between social groups with varying cultures, tactics, and goals.

In conclusion, it is evident that all of these works reach similar conclusions about employees and professionals gaining power over volunteers and amateurs. This alteration in the power dynamics among volunteers and employees, non-professionals and professionals also helps to disturb the equilibrium in the interaction among actors (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. Jean Meynaud's (1966) work was released in the same timeframe from a socio-political perspective and examined the connection between sports and governmental policies at both the national and local levels. By distinguishing between the technical, elective, and administrative branches, Ramanantsoa and Thiéry-Baslé (1989) developed a diagnostic framework for sports federations based on their structural and organizational types toward the end of the 1980s. The HEC Paris business school's analytical model of organizations, which separates strategy, structure, decision-making, and culture, was used to predict a greater alignment between enterprises and nonprofits. Bertrand Moingeon (1991) applied the same organizational framework to examine the competition for power within the sports committees of the French Federation of Ice Sports, particularly hockey, as they strive to professionalize more than other related sports. The author clarifies that the power dynamics change based on economic challenges affecting sports institutions. In his study in 1995, Charles Pigeassou explored how the professionalization of sports organizations impacts the way managers operate and are represented. Additionally, he mentioned that over 60% of participants

believe that the position of volunteer manager is gradually vanishing. As a result, there is a focus on exploring more rational operational frameworks at the expense of original objectives and core missions. In contrast to these perspectives, Emmanuel Bayle (2001) uses the case of the 1996 elections as an example, highlighting that only 5 out of 29 presidents of Olympic federations and 15 out of 53 presidents of non-Olympic federations were replaced. He believes that the president's role exposes 'strategies of establishment' (Bayle, 2001). Bayle reexamined the strategic cores identified by François Mayaux (1996) in national associations to define four governance modes in sports federations: strong presidential type with significant decision-making power, a joint presidential type with shared power between president and director. The president and a full-time actor who frequently serves as the national technical director are part of the split presidential type, where the president is backed by a group of paid directors who collaborate on and delegate tasks, and the managerial presidential type, where either the administrative director or the technical director takes charge of the core team.

The common thread among these French works (not all of which are listed) is their typological analysis of sports organizations, aiming to outline various internal structures, political organizations, and governance methods, as well as strategies like alliances, protection, acquisition, and opposition (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. Nonetheless, this progress can only be understood through the impact of internal and external factors, referred to as contingency factors by Henry Mintzberg (1982), such as environment, age, or size of the organization. Contingency theories aim to overcome this challenge by presenting a more flexible and dynamic perspective of organizations, specifically focusing on the concept of organizational life cycles.

The third aspect of developing a sociology of sports organizations is founded on contingency theories that first appeared in the 1970s (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2021**)**. Inspired by Henry

Mintzberg's configurational models (1982), Christophe Durand (1994) developed a life cycle specifically for professional clubs. The top of the hierarchy consists of club presidents and paid managers whose skills and knowledge are valued based on the team's performance. The center line connecting the peak and the bottom consists of coaches, sports managers, and business managers. The author categorizes them as middle managers, distinguishing between administrative and technical staff. The core performers are either paid athletes or freelancers who have turned into 'mercenaries' for the team that hires them. Based on the various types of external partnerships, professional clubs can be classified into five internal alliances: entrepreneurial, machine, ideological, professional, and political, as proposed by the author. In the end, he proposed a life cycle model for professional sports teams. This form may vary depending on the severity of internal and external political disputes. Also based on Mintzberg's classification of regulatory mechanisms (1982), Nizet and Pichault (1995) identified four influence systems in sports organizations: the personal control system places power at the top level and oversees through direct supervision; the specialized skills system empowers the core workers who coordinate through qualification standardization; the bureaucratic control system relies on work process and result standardization by analysts; the ideological control system places power with ideology analysts who coordinate by norm standardization. Bayle (2001) discusses various European and Anglo-Saxon studies that examine Mintzberg's theories about professionalizing NSFs. These authors agree that major sports federations are steadily transitioning toward a more bureaucratic and professionalized structure. Pitter's (1990) case study demonstrated how a small, community-based track and field club's hierarchical, centralized power structure benefited coaches and the most accomplished athletes, resulting in unequal access to resources and organizational authority. Moreover, the author stated that although the mechanics of power are complicated, a common conviction in the purity of the performance

principle helps members accept the legality of a club's structure. Those in charge of clubs must precisely choose the mix of persuasion and compulsion to employ. Before resistance reaches significant levels that would call into question its legitimacy, the hegemonic class incorporates potential opposition through pressure, threats, concessions, and negotiation.

The primary feature of local sport organizations, as per Mintzberg's organizational theory, is the amateur clubs' uncomplicated structure (Pitter, 1990). Centralization in amateur clubs may facilitate decision-making and attract collaborators who prefer non-bureaucratic environments, but it can also hinder clubs' growth since it places all the decision-making power in one person. Indeed, clubs or federations possess structures where power struggles take place, generating conflicts or alliances between different actors (Pitter, 1990). Malenfant (1989) noted that much remains to be studied in the field of sports organizations in France. She suggests focusing research on three parameters: strategy, structures, and decision-making processes within sports organizations. Studying organizational psychology in sports highlights the importance of psychosocial factors that contribute to organizational success. Furthermore, it offers insights into bridging the divide between strict sport management frameworks (Slack & Parent, 2006) and functionalist sociological interpretations of organizational operations (Malenfant, 1989). Slack and Kikulis (1989) state that despite a shortage of studies on sport associations in Canada, some topics pertaining to these organizations surface in the literature. Questions about bureaucratization, gender, leadership, professionalization, reliance on the government, and organizational change are among the most common of these.

Starting with the bureaucratization, multiple researchers have proposed that in the last twenty-five years, the organizations managing amateur sports in Canada have become increasingly bureaucratic (Slack, 1985). This process of bureaucratization is mostly connected to the increased

access to government resources by sport organizations and higher levels of interdependence among sport organizations, government, and quasi-government agencies like the Coaching Association of Canada, the National Sport and Recreation Centre, and the Sport Marketing Council. Most of the funding provided by government agencies in Canada to sport organizations have been focused on enhancing the human resources and programs of these organizations. This initiative is expected to result in greater specialization within the organization, creating a bureaucratic structural element. The growing levels of interconnectedness within sports organizations may also result in varying aspects of a bureaucratic system being implemented (Slack & Kikulis, 1989). Furthermore, the concept of leadership has been extensively studied in the field of sociology within organizations (Gouldner, 1950; Selznick, 1957; Weber, 1968). Chelladurai primarily relies on organizational behavior, focusing on the social and psychological elements of organizations, to create a diverse leadership model, rather than organizational theory, which examines the sociological aspects of organizations. He also developed a leadership scale for sports (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Chelladurai & Carron, 1981) that has been used in a variety of organizational settings, specifically concerning coaching leadership. Regarding professionalization, it is well documented in the literature that Canadian amateur sport organizations have been moving toward greater professionalization in their evolving administrative and technical frameworks. Since the early 1970s, there has been a significant increase in the full-time administration, technical, and support staff of these organizations (Macintosh et al., 1987). The rise in professional staff can be attributed primarily to increased government participation and funding for sports organizations. Volunteer groups without sufficient full-time staff are not equipped to effectively address issues stemming from the scale of athletics in Canada (Slack & Kikulis, 1989).

For the resource dependence aspect, federal and provincial governments have a significant impact on the coordination of amateur sports in Canada, according to Broom and Baka (1978). In particular, amateur sports groups rely heavily on financial support from the government for the growth and upkeep of their initiatives and employees. Therefore, the government, at federal and provincial levels, has positioned itself as a key player in the amateur sports system (Macintosh et al., 1987). The establishment of the National Sport and Recreation Centre (NSRC) in 1970, along with increased funding over time, have greatly heightened Canadian sport organizations' reliance on the federal government at a national level. The NSRC offers administrative facilities and support services to assist in the day-to-day administration of these organizations. Regarding organizational change, a conceptual framework for the study of organizational transformation was created by Slack and Hinings in 1987. They contend that the present change in Canadian amateur sport organizations is more than just a gradual shift toward a more professional and bureaucratic organizational structure, as has been perceived in the past. Instead, the kind of transformation that Canada's sports organizations are going through will compel them to adopt new organizational design models.

Voluntary sport federations and sport clubs, with a rich history, continue to play a key role in organizing, promoting, and advancing sports on both national and international levels. The main responsibilities of sport federations consist of representing one or more sports, advocating for their interests within society and with National/International Sport Organizations (NSOs), encouraging competitive sports and arranging competitions, championships, and sporting events, and formulating rules and regulations that oversee them. In recent years, their influence has increased in various countries in terms of social, economic, and political aspects. Nevertheless, due to alterations in contemporary sports and society, sport federations are currently encountering a range of obstacles

(Nagel et al., 2015). First, a significant increase in global competition in elite sports has been observed. At the same time, sport activities are becoming more diverse and accessible to a wider range of people ('sports for all'). Moreover, the services of these organizations can no longer rely solely on volunteers, and to some extent, paid employees are also needed. Additionally, sports federations are facing obstacles in securing additional funding. They are collaborating with new partners, both public and private organizations, and a wider variety of stakeholders as they attempt to secure government funding amidst shifting priorities (Nagel et al., 2015). These difficulties suggest that in order to carry out their duties more effectively and to sufficiently satisfy the demands of a complex and constantly evolving environment, sport federations must establish modern management structures and programs. To more effectively manage these complex challenges, these advances are linked to new governance structures, enhanced strategic capabilities, and capacity building at the national and international levels (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011; Robinson & Minikin, 2011).

The deployment of efficiency-based management tools (such as strategic planning, human resource management, and reporting tools) and the strengthening of institutional management are two examples of how this can lead to significant organizational changes within sport federations (Nagel et al., 2015). In this context, it is important to distinguish between two key perspectives on professionalization: (1) professionalization in the context of occupational fields (in traditional professions like teaching, law, medicine, etc.), also known as 'professionalism' (Evetts, 2011) or 'occupational professionalization' (Dowling et al., 2014); and (2) professionalization (of the organizational structures) in the context of the efficiency and rationalization of organizations (Chantelat, 2001; Dowling et al., 2014). Several types of professionalism seen in sport federations are the authors' special primary focus. They examined how these forms appear and change in reaction to

shifting organizational settings and demands (Nagel et al., 2015). To begin with, it is essential to develop a thorough understanding of the various forms that define the professionalization of sport federations. Distinction between dimensions can be made according to Bayle and Robinson (2007) and Legay (2001): The first dimension is related to the professionalization of activities: A professional organization sets objectives, devises and enacts strategies to achieve them, and consistently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of these strategies. Assessment provides feedback and enables a process of self-monitoring and regulation, allowing for potential enhancements. In addition, this assessment also influences the roles and positions within the organization. The second aspect is based on the professionalization of individuals*:* This implies an increase in the number of paid staff members and in the skills of volunteers, along with the amount of time they contribute to the organization. The individual's activities can fall into three categories: political, managerial (project or activities), and operational (administrative, sporting, or development tasks). Hence, more structured approaches to human resource management can develop, including a plan for hiring professionals and volunteers, new approaches to job roles, varied types of rewards, and training protocols. Also, the third dimension revolves around the professionalization of structures and processes*:* This refers to centralization and a more structured approach to decision-making. It can also be linked with the focus on the specific roles and functions required for various tasks, emerging connections within or between organizations, the facilitation of learning within organizations and managing knowledge, along with the utilization of contemporary communication and administrative technologies.

To explore the causes of professionalization, Horch and Schütte (2009) highlight the factors that impact the necessity for paid managers, such as the associated costs and benefits, the role of a paid managing director as a cultural signal, ties to stakeholders in business and government

sectors, and growing job demands. Sport associations, federations, and clubs do not appear to be under significant pressure to hire more paid managers in Germany (Horch & Schütte, 2009). Seippel (2002) highlights significant variations in different sports institutions in Norway, with some facing pressure to hire paid staff. Cachay, Thiel, and Meier (2001) conducted a comparison between sport federations and clubs in Germany, revealing that sport federations employ a greater number of paid staff compared to sport clubs. These disparities are attributed to the increased government subsidies received by the federations. Therefore, financial resources play a vital role in the professional development of a sports organization. Thiel, Meier, and Cachay (2006) show that in a subsequent study a conventional corporate culture can obstruct the process of professionalization. The authors also demonstrate that strategic planning and the trust of members in chairpersons responsible for organizational change processes are key requirements for professionalization.

In summary, both internal and external factors are crucial in the professionalization of sports organizations. While most studies focus on sport clubs rather than sport federations, the key findings can still be applied to the multi-level framework. Initially, sport organizations face dynamic environmental conditions and coercive pressure from government and sport policy, business partners and media, as well as umbrella sport federations. The role of professionalization is strongly influenced by the expectations and resources of stakeholders in sport and society (Nagel et al., 2015). In addition to these external factors, a number of studies examine the vital importance of endogenous causes for professionalization, with a focus on the following primary elements: (1) increasing demands on the organization's work; (2) the federation's size and sport; (3) financial resources; (4) the board's strategic capability; (5) decision-making structures; (6) individual key actors; (7) the role of the board and paid managing director(s); and (8) organizational values.

Therefore, when examining the professionalization of every sport organization, it is necessary to take into account each organization's unique structure (Nagel et al., 2015).

Turning to the consequences of professionalization, Thibault, Slack, and Hinings (1991) demonstrate that the recruitment of specialized personnel in Canadian sport organizations boosts specialization and formalization by altering the structural configurations. This suggests a change in organizational structure as shown by typological methods (Theodoraki & Henry, 1994; Thibault et al., 1991). Following Max Weber's research, this development can be defined by a trend towards bureaucratization (Bernardeau-Moreau, 2004; Slack, 1985). Arcioni and Bayle (2012) and Kikulis (2000) illustrate how the professionalization process and the political involvement of the CEO or executive director can impact organizational governance. Ferkins et al. (2010) also demonstrate how professionalization impacts the governance of sport associations and presents specific challenges and obstacles. In this context, the importance of shared leadership, board motivations, roles, structures, and performance is highlighted. There is opposition to professionalization in organizations where volunteer values are strongly ingrained and where there is a risk of causing significant conflicts by changing the cultural institution of the sports organization. Multiple research studies examine the disputes and conflicts between paid employees and volunteer workers and have primarily identified negative impacts on volunteerism. On the other hand, Thiel et al. (2006) argue that having paid staff does not harm sport clubs' identities and can even encourage volunteerism if the paid staff's tasks align with the organization's objectives and culture, which contradict earlier research (Enjolras, 2002). In a broader sense, Taylor and McGraw (2006) examine the challenges associated with defining human resource management within sports organizations. Professionalization can also have an effect on the management of performance in NSOs (Bayle & Robinson, 2007). A review of recent research shows how sport organizations aim to improve efficiency and

effectiveness by strengthening managerial abilities (Ferkins et al., 2010). In this situation, the performance of the board has been shown to be a compelling variable affected by professionalization (Hoye & Doherty, 2011). Using this multi-level framework, the authors incorporate current theoretical insights and develop more precise research questions regarding the causes and effects of professionalization in sports federations. Organizational changes can result from various factors and barriers. These factors may arise either from the organization itself (endogenous factors) or from their internal or external environment (exogenous factors) (Nagel et al., 2015).

Exogenously determined change: When discussing reasons for organizational change originating from external sources, environmental impacts can be classified into dynamism and complexity. These factors in turn influence the need for change in companies (Kieser, 1975). Contingency theory, also known as the situational approach, states that organizational traits are altered in reaction to environmental factors (Blau & Schoenherr, 1971; Child, 1972). Additionally, the goals, interests, and culture of member organizations within the internal environment can also play a role in the professional development of the umbrella organization. They have the ability to either encourage the process from the grassroots level to improve their own circumstances by gaining better support and outcomes from their federation, or impede it due to reasons such as avoiding higher dues or because it conflicts with their organizational values. Member organizations are likely to play a more prominent role in shaping the professionalization process in the sports and administrative sectors compared to development areas like events, sports promotion, and utilizing sports for development purposes.

Endogenously determined change: In line with organizational theories rooted in the rational-choice paradigm, internal organizational change is determined by the goals of the organization; it becomes an intentional effort to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Increasing efficiency

could involve optimizing organizational structures through measures such as performance incentives to minimize disparities between collective and individual goals. Additional internal organizational factors, as identified by Kieser (2002) as situational factors, may also play a role in the professionalization of a sports federation, including aspects like size and funding. The organizational and financial status, socio-economic rationale, cultural values, and the characteristics of the sport also play a role. It is likely that larger I organizations with more financial resources and a well-established strategy are more inclined to implement formalized professional structures in three areas (sport, administration, and development), while medium-sized and small federations with limited financial resources tend to have hybrid professional structures that mainly focus on sport and administration. Within the authors' multi-level framework, two points of view to be considered when examining the effects of professionalization in sports federations are: (a) the impact on the headquarters of the professionalized federation and (b) the impact on member organizations and external stakeholders.

From a sport management perspective, professionalization involves two phases. The initial process involves specialized training, skills, exclusivity, complexity, a code of ethics, obtaining specific credentials, and building professional-client relationships (Dowling et al., 2014). At a later stage, professionalization refers to the transformation of occupations in order to attain professional recognition (Dowling et al., 2014). Voluntary sports clubs are still far from becoming fully professionalized in accordance with this more rigorous definition of the term (Seippel, 2019).

In Norwegian sports, the initiation of a Quality Club Programme (QCP) by the Football Association of Norway (NFF) in early 2014 is an example of professionalization reaching small-scale voluntary sports, which was inspired by the English Standard Chartered Programme and UEFA's grassroots program. The goal of QCP is to assist soccer teams in their development by

providing education, documentation, teaching ethics and societal values, and by enhancing organizational structure. If they succeed, the clubs are recognized as high-quality clubs. Projects that aim to professionalize, such as QCP pose a dilemma for voluntary sports clubs (Seippel, 2019). In the view of many scholars, the traditional characteristics of voluntary organizations remain valuable and essential. Voluntary organizations offer an alternative to the goals pushed by modern societies' dominant, myopic performance, and profit-focused ideologies; they are less complex, less bureaucratic, and potentially more innovative than bigger, highly organized and varied organizations. They have less stringent and formal requirements for qualifications, making them generally more open and inclusive. However, voluntary organizations are at risk due to their small size, lack of formal skills, and ambiguous organizational structure. They frequently lack economic and political resources, and are often difficult to manage due to unclear lines of authority. QCP's goal is to assist clubs in enhancing their performance in four aspects: activity, structure, skills, and social and ethical responsibilities. Joining the program is optional and requires an application; the NFF then assigns a supervisor to each club. Clubs are accredited based on meeting particular criteria across four areas and at three tiers (gold, silver, bronze). As of the end of 2017, 192 out of 1818 NFF clubs had achieved bronze level certification for quality, with an additional 190 clubs in the process of certification. The initial silver quality club received certification in 2017 (Seippel, 2019).

First, Norwegian sports primarily rely on voluntary work, according to Seippel & Skille (2015). Second, there are specific sport policies in place for both governmental bodies and sports groups in Norway (Seippel, 2019). Considering the contextual factors and processes that QCP aims to stimulate, it appears logical that the new institutionalism approach is suitable for a voluntary

sports environment. In this theory, organizations develop not only by focusing on technical efficiency but also by adapting to expectations and demands from higher levels in their environment. The new institutional perspective states that signals from official regulations, laws, and professional norms influence organizational behavior. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) also propose three social mechanisms—mimetic, normative, and coercive imitations—that could be valuable for examining these processes (O'Brien & Slack, 2004).

The current situation involves different stages of professionalization processes, with the initial stage focusing on the introduction of skills, knowledge, and expertise within organizations. Professionalization could impact power, influence, and communication within and between organizations and their environments in the later stages (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001). A common theme in organizational sociology is the trend for organizations to evolve into bureaucracies with power hierarchies that may not align with democratic principles (Du Gay, 2000). Thibault, Slack, and Hinings (1991) suggested in their research on voluntary sport organizations that a direct connection exists between professionalization and bureaucratization. In more recent research, Lucassen and de Bakker (2016) demonstrated how sport organizations often adopt mixed structures at the intersection of government, business, and community.

The second aspect of professionalization pertains to the internal structures within organizations. Initially, even though it is not frequently addressed in the professionalization literature, voluntary sport clubs, with their distinct activities (such as different sports, levels, gender, and age), are loosely connected and divided into sections that do not always communicate effectively (Orton & Weick, 1990). Additionally, literature on organizations explores the idea that organizations that follow professional values and practices may react by employing strategies such as decoupling or resistance (Heinze & Di, 2017; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; O'Toole & Grey, 2016).

Third, there are several features of voluntary organizations, aside from their loose structure, may impact how they respond to professionalization processes. Most crucially, volunteer organizations are frequently considered more difficult to manage and to have leaders with less power than those in for-profit companies (Swidler, 1979). This is due to the presence of an 'exit option' in voluntary organizations: if members feel overly controlled, they are free to leave (Warren, 2001). For-profit companies tend to have more utilitarian incentives, fewer norms, and lower emotional attachments compared to volunteer groups (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014).

This study has examined how certain Norwegian football clubs justify their involvement in QCP, which is interpreted as a form of professionalization. New institutionalism and institutional logics were used to analyze how institutional context shapes these decisions (Seippel, 2019).

In recent years, the professionalization of organizational features of amateur sports organizations has considerably altered the role of volunteers (Slack, 1985). The modernization processes and the professionalization of NSFs are intertwined and cannot be easily separated. For instance, Kikulis (2000) claimed that 'the growth of these organizations and the complexity of demands placed upon them' have been the fundamental drivers of professionalization. This points to a broader process that is largely influenced by commercialization. The 'complexity of demands' relates mainly to the accountability 'technologies' and related stakeholder conflicts that come with public investment and modernization changes, although in many situations, this expansion is a direct outcome of increasing government spending (Slack, 1985). The strategies used by volunteer executives in sport federations are the main focus of Rail's (1988) study. Two sport federations, the Quebec Olympic Handball Federation and the Quebec Swimming Federation, provided both objective and subjective statistics. Four ideal forms of tactics (Weber, 1958) were found within

the two sport federations. The formal position and organizational level of the executives—(a) provincial full-time administrator, (b) provincial volunteer executive, (c) regional volunteer executive, and (d) local executive, such as club administrator or coach—were found to be well-aligned with these methods (Rail, 1988). There are four ideal categories of strategies. The following is a summary of how various methods interact. Technocracy is a strategy used by full-time administrators, partly to safeguard their jobs. In response, provincial volunteer executives utilize a counteroffensive approach to maintain decision-making authority as a result of this approach. The implementation of both tactics, with one being a reaction to the other, results in a separation of regional and local leaders. Regional volunteer executives protect their region's autonomy through a strategy of political withdrawal, but this also leads to increased isolation from provincial executives. Furthermore, regional executives are disconnected from local executives, whom they are supposed to represent. Truly, the latter employ a comprehensive defense strategy to safeguard both their autonomy and that of their club. Local executives choose to bypass regional and provincial volunteers and communicate directly with full-time administrators for their club's needs.

To gain better insight into the impact of volunteering in the sports landscape of Lebanon, it was essential to explore this phenomenon within the Lebanese sports federations. An interview with Mr. Jihad Salameh, an Olympic International Lecturer and one of the most prominent figures in Lebanese sports, focused on Lebanese sports federations and provided insight into the percentages between volunteers and employees within these federations. During the conversation, Mr. Salameh talked about how the Lebanese sports federations are organized, notably in terms of staffing: all Lebanese sports federations' executive committees operate under a voluntary system, which means that all thier members are volunteers by law and are elected for a term of four years. There are two types of volunteers in the Lebanese sports federations: part-time volunteers and

volunteers who are elected members. However, there are some exceptions regarding the presence of employees on the executive committee especially in the case of the Lebanese Football Association. For example, FIFA modified its rules for all affiliated federations, requiring the appointment of a paid employee as the General Secretary (personal communication with Mr. Jihad Salameh, 2024). Mr. Salameh provided detailed information about the 29 Lebanese sports federations that are members of the Lebanese Olympic Committee (LOC). These 29 Lebanese sports federations hold their elections every four years after the end of each Summer Olympic Games. He also detailed the number of volunteers (executive committee members) and employees (with salaries) in these federations (personal communication with Mr. Jihad Salameh, 2024).

Table 5: *Percentages of Employees and Volunteers in the Sports Federations That are Members of the LOC*

Federations	Number of Employees	Number of Volunteers	Total	Percentages of Employees	Percentages of Volunteers
1-Athletics	1	9	10	10%	90%
2-Rowing	0	7	7	0%	100%
3-Badminton	0	9	9	0%	100%
4-Basketball	6	15	21	28.57%	71.42%
5-Boxing	0	7	7	0%	100%
6-Canoe Kayak	0	7	7	0%	100%
7-Cycling	0	7	7	0%	100%
8-Equestrian	1	9	10	10%	90%
9-Fencing	0	7	7	0%	100%
10-Football	6	11	17	35.29%	64.70%
11-Gymnastics	0	7	7	0%	100%
12-Weight-lifting	0	7	7	0%	100%
13-Handball	1	9	10	10%	90%
14-Judo	1	9	10	10%	90%

15-Wrestling	0	7	7	0%	100%
16-Swimming	0	11	11	0%	100%
17-Taekwondo	3	9	12	25%	75%
18-Tennis	1	9	10	10%	90%
19-Table Tennis	1	11	12	8.33%	91.66%
20-Paralympics	1	9	10	10%	90%
21-Shooting	1	9	10	10%	90%
22-Archery	0	7	7	0%	100%
23-Triathlon	0	7	7	0%	100%
24-Sailing	0	7	7	0%	100%
25-Volleyball	3	15	18	16.66%	83.33%
26-Ski	1	11	12	8.33%	91.66%
27-Rugby Union	0	7	7	0%	100%
28-Dance	0	9	9	0%	100%
29-Squash	0	7	7	0%	100%

Among the 29 federations, 16 (55.17%) consist solely of executive committee members, indicating that they function with 100% volunteers and without any employees. Nine federations (31.03%) consist of only one employee, with the remainder being volunteers. When examining particular federations, football employs six individuals, representing 35.29% of its overall 17 members, including employees and elected volunteers. Basketball employs six individuals, which constitutes 28.57% of its overall 21 members. In taekwondo, 25% of its total members are paid members while the rest (75%) are volunteer members. Volleyball employs three paid individuals, representing 16.66% of its overall 18 members, which encompass both employees and selected volunteers. Analyzing the history of volunteering in France is crucial, as it uncovers the evolution of volunteerism in sports associations and federations throughout the nation, particularly after examining the volunteering context within Lebanese sports organizations and their federations.

Moreover, it facilitates a comparison of volunteer roles across the two countries, especially regarding their sports federations and salary structures, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive comparison of the sports systems in Lebanon and France. The establishment of sports activities outside of schools was made possible by public schools and the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement. The objective was to develop initiatives that would counter Catholic private schools and, in particular, the sports activities organized by parishes. In 1850, thanks to several volunteer leaders among school teachers, sport was made mandatory in public schools. Up until 1900, there was little distinction between leaders and athletes within clubs. After 1900, the roles within sports organizations became increasingly specialized. In 1901, legislation granted legal recognition to associations, resulting in increased authority for volunteer sports leaders. In France, sports organizations consist of: 150,000 sports clubs, 1,000,000 volunteers, 225 million hours, and 125,000 jobs (Malenfant, 1987). French NSFs benefit from more than 3.5 million volunteers who contribute roughly 300 million hours annually to service, equivalent to approximately 160,000 full-time positions (French National Institute of Statistics, 2002). As a result, there is significant government involvement in sports in France, and to support the operations of NSFs, the state offers considerable direct and indirect funding (Bayle & Robinson, 2007).

Moving forward, it is crucial to examine more closely the volunteering procedures within sports associations and federations in France. According to the Olbia CDES survey in 2019, starting with sport associations, the number of volunteers is estimated at 6.8 million, including one million regulars involved with responsibilities (president, members of committees, etc.), for 180,000 sport associations and 80,000 full-time employees. The ratio is approximately one employee per 10 volunteers in sport associations. Furthermore, in the sport federations, there are

2,700 employees. Olympic federations account for 63% of these positions. The number of volunteers is estimated at one million within sports federations (including 12,000 volunteers in national centers, 150,000 volunteers in regional committees or leagues and 850,000 volunteers in departmental committees). The ratio is therefore approximately one salaried employee per five volunteers in sports federations. To compare the ratio of employees to volunteers between the Lebanese and French sports federations, the ratio for the Lebanese Olympic National Federations was calculated, with total of 27 employees and total 255 volunteers; the employee-to-volunteer ratio is 27:255. In the Lebanese Olympic National Federations, the employee-to-volunteer ratio is approximately 1:9, suggesting that for each employee, there are approximately nine volunteers.

Table 6: *Ratio of Employees/Volunteers in the Lebanese Olympic National Federations and French Sports Federations*

Variables / **Federations**	**Employees**	**Volunteers**	**Ratio (Employees: Volunteers)**
Lebanese Olympic National Federations	1 (11%)	9	1:9
French Sports Federations	1 (20%)	5	1:5

In France, 20% of individuals connected to federations are employees, showing a ratio of one employee for every five volunteers (1:5). Conversely, Lebanon's situation presents a contrast. In this context, employees account for just 11% of the individuals engaged in federations, resulting in a ratio of one employee for every nine volunteers (1:9). This shows that the ratio of employees is nearly twice as large in France compared to Lebanon.

To elaborate on these ratios and the relationship between employees and volunteers, salary data were obtained to further explain these ratios.

Table 7: *Variation of Salaries Across Different Positions in Lebanese and French Sports Federations*

Federations / **Salaries**	**Lebanese Sports Federations**	**French Sports Federations**
Salaries for employees per month	Average of $300-$400 and $800-$1,000 = $625	€2,800 including charges equivalent to $2,880
Salaries for volunteers with responsibilities	$0	The president of the federation holds an exceptional position that may receive a salary in the region of €4,000, including charges, which is equivalent to **$4,152**
Salaries for volunteers with lesser responsibilities	mainly transportation and food fees	mainly transportation and food fees

Salaries for employees in the Lebanese sports federations range from $300 to $400 and from $800 to $1,000 in all Lebanese sports federations (depending on working hours/days and the federations' budget) (personal communication with Mr. Jihad Salameh, 2025). To determine the average, the first range ($300-$400) was averaged as follows: ($300 + $400) /2 = $350. The second range ($800-$1,000) was calculated similarly: ($800 + $1,000) /2 = $900. The overall average was

then computed by averaging these two results: ($350 + $900)/2 = $625. Therefore, it can be concluded that the average salary for employees in the Lebanese sports federations is $625. On the other hand, the salary of employees in the French sports federations is estimated at €2,800 per month, including charges which are equivalent to $2880 per month (approx. 1 EUR = 1.03 USD based on February 2025 exchange rates) (In discussion with Denis Bernardeau-Moreau, professor of sport sociology, February 2025). In summary, the larger proportion of employees in French sports federations (20%) relative to their Lebanese equivalents (11%) can be linked to the increased funding and resources accessible in France. This financial support allows French federations to sustain a more professional staff, improving their operational efficiency and effectiveness. Volunteers in Lebanese and French sports federations are mainly compensated for transportation and food. In Lebanon, this compensation differs based on the events organized by the sports federations (personal communication with Mr. Jihad Salameh, 2025). Similarly, volunteers within French sports federations are primarily paid for these costs as well (In discussion with Denis Bernardeau-Moreau, professor of sport sociology, February 2025).

According to Law No. 2001-1275 of December 28, 2001, the French sports federations' executive committee consists entirely of volunteers by law, except that the president's position is exceptional and can be compensated, which is permitted in France. Law No. 2001-1275 of December 28, 2001, regulates the legal framework governing the operation of non-profit associations in France, including sports federations. In particular, it explains the governance framework of non-profit entities referred to as associations 'Loi 1901', which encompasses the majority of French sports federations. According to this law, the primary principle is that the heads of these organizations, such as presidents, are typically volunteers and do not earn a wage. Nonetheless, the law

provides for certain exceptions where leaders may be compensated if they hold a contract for professional services or if the federation is financially able to remunerate them. Volunteers in the French sports federations (those with significant responsibilities, such as the president) are estimated to receive a salary of €4,000 per month, including charges (equivalent to $4,152) (In discussion with Denis Bernardeau-Moreau, professor of sport sociology, February 2025). To sum up, the difference in salaries for volunteers in prominent roles within Lebanese sports federations sharply contrasts with that of their counterparts in France. Although Lebanese volunteers in the executive committee do not receive any financial payment, their French counterparts in the presidential role of the federations earn an amount that is 2.26 times higher than the minimum wage in France.

After a thorough analysis, it is clear that, although the Lebanese sports structure is apparently similar to the French sports structure, significant differences exist in reality between the sports structures of Lebanon and France.

Table 8: *Main Differences Between the Lebanese and French Sports Structures*

Sports Structures / **Differences**	**Lebanese Sports Structure**	**French Sports Structure**
Ratio of employees in the sports federations	The ratio of employees is almost twice as large in France	
Salary of president of the federations	In France, volunteers holding significant roles, such as the president, earn approximately $4,152. In contrast, their counterparts in Lebanon receive no monetary compensation at all.	

Ministry of Youth and Sports	• In contrast to France, 40% of the positions in the Lebanese Youth and Sports Ministry are vacant. • In contrast to France, employees in Lebanon are often hired in an illegal manner.
Olympic Committee	The CNOSF comprises Regional Olympic and Sports Committees, Departmental Olympic and Sports Committees, and various Departmental Committees, all of which report to the National Olympic and Sports Committee. Conversely, Lebanon lacks such organized departments within its Olympic Committee, resulting in a more limited organizational presence across the nation.

These differences are evident in important aspects such as the ratio of employees in the sports federations, the salaries of the president of the federation, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Olympic Committee. French sports federations generally hire more employees and have a president whose pay exceeds the average salary in France. In Lebanon, however, the president of a sports federation does not earn any income for their position. Consequently, French sports federations function within a notably more professional organizational framework. Therefore, it seems that the similarities between the Lebanese and French sports structures are only superficial.

Introduction to Part II: Lebanon in Focus – History, Sports, and the Educational Landscape

Through sports, the cultural, social, and geopolitical characteristics of nations can be effectively explored. In Lebanon, which has a diverse cultural history and a rich tapestry of influences, sports reflect local traditions and external forces that shape its sporting scene. Situated at the intersection of the Mediterranean and influenced by multiple civilizations over thousands of years, Lebanon's sporting legacy embodies strength, creativity, and a blend of global influences. Lebanon's sports are affected not only by its own history but also by neighboring countries, regional conflicts, and global sports trends. These influences have left a lasting impression on Lebanon's approaches sports, from ancient, civilization-based traditional games to modern competitions of global significance. This introduction examines the impact of external factors on the sports culture of Lebanon, spotlighting how historical events and current trends have impacted the relationship between sports and society.

Part II of the thesis reviews the historical background across four main chapters. It starts with Chapter 1: History of Lebanon to provide some national context. This is followed by Chapter 2: History of Sports in Lebanon and Chapter 3: History of University Sports in Lebanon to examine how the country's athletic culture developed over time. The section ends with Chapter 4: Historical Perspectives on Educational Policy: French and American Influence on Lebanon, which examines the external factors that shaped the Lebanese academic system.

Chapter 1: History of Lebanon

Introduction

Lebanon, due to its location, has a demographically diverse and a complex history influenced by its strategic position. The Phoenician civilization, well known for its skills in maritime trade and development of the alphabet, has a history dating back to around 1500–300 BCE. The area eventually became part of the Roman and Byzantine empires. Lebanon came under Islamic rule in the 7th century CE, beginning with the Umayyads and later the Abbasids, before being taken by the Crusaders in the 12th century. The territory was governed by the Mamluks and then the Ottomans until World War I, when it came under French control in the form of a mandate. After gaining independence in 1943, Lebanon has experienced both periods of growth and turmoil, such as a devastating civil war that endured from 1975 to 1990. Currently, Lebanon continues to be a country with a rich cultural legacy and deep historical roots, facing ongoing political and economic difficulties as it strives for stability and advancement. This section describes the country of Lebanon in terms of civilizations, history, politics, and religious background. The data presented in this section covers all the major events that occurred in the Lebanese territory even before its creation.

Lebanon is a Middle Eastern country of 10,452 km², bordered by Syria to the east, Palestine to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Lebanon's geographical location has turned it into a focal point for outside powers (Salil, 2020). Additionally, the country's small size and its internal demographic divisions have allowed foreign powers to find allies in Lebanon and exert influence in the region. The West's inability to attain unity across the available forces often led to inevitably split governments and regular civil discord (Salil, 2020). Therefore, one of Lebanon's greatest challenges—until this day—is maintaining balance across its diverse communities and

securing access to trade routes, which tend to be manipulated by outside powers (Tannous, 1997; Salil, 2020). According to the U.S. Department of State (2022), Lebanon comprises 18 officially recognized religious groups. The division is as follows: Five Muslim groups (Shia, Sunni, Druze, Alawite, and Ismaili), twelve Christian groups (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian, Chaldean, Copt, Evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic), and Jews. This diverse nature is mostly reflected in Lebanon's educational structure whereby systems and philosophies tend to vary and reflect the numerous religious communities (Barakat, 1977).

Moreover, Lebanon tends to heavily depend on neighboring countries to maintain its political and economic stability (Salil, 2020). Lebanon's political elites have been playing a vital role in determining the country's political reality (Pakradounian, 2018). Over the years, these elites have become leaders of political parties with set ideologies and goals for their respective communities, thus leading to a reinforcement of the ethnic and sectarian identities in the country. Today, the Lebanese citizen's political affiliation can be almost immediately inferred from their religion, ethnic background, spoken language(s), region, school and so on (Pakradounian, 2018). This has led to the idealization of 'influential individuals' based on their religious beliefs and sectarian backgrounds (Pakradounian, 2018).

1.1 Ancient Times

1.1.1 Phoenicians in Lebanon

The Phoenicians were among the earliest civilizations to leave a mark on Lebanese history. While the date of their first emergence remains uncertain, studies suggest that they may have appeared sometime between 2100 and 2300 BCE in the Levant—what is now known as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine—also previously known as the land of Canaan (Malaspina, 2009). The

Phoenicians were navigators, sailors, and traders who managed to spread their wealth and influence across the region. Their main city-states included Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, each with a unique identity and special commercial trade. Tyre was the largest Phoenician city, with an influence that stretched as wide as the Phoenician civilization, putting Lebanon on the world map. Between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE, the Phoenicians had a significant impact in the Mediterranean region as they relied on the Lebanese cedar as one of their most valuable natural resources. The cedar is known for its size, as it can grow up to 100 feet and live for a thousand years. Its wood was used in shipbuilding and trading to Egypt and Palestine to compensate for their lack of forest resources (Malaspina, 2009). The ancient Egyptians grew fond of cedar wood and used it to build temples, create coffins for their mummies, and even benefited from tree resin in the mummification process (Malaspina, 2009).

1.1.2 Assyrian Rule in Lebanon

Despite their undeniable trade and rich history, the Phoenicians were not skilled warriors. Phoenicia's location at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea combined with its lack of unity made it a vulnerable target for invaders who ruled the land for years (Malaspina, 2009). First to conquer Phoenician soil were the Assyrians in 867 BCE, who called the land 'Lebanon', which means 'white' in Assyrian, referencing the snow-filled mountains and the land's limestone soil (Malaspina, 2009). The Assyrians ruled over Mesopotamia, a rich farmland area known as the Fertile Crescent lying between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which includes modern-day Iraq (Malaspina, 2009).

1.2 Greek and Roman Periods

1.2.1 Babylonian Rule and the Persian Empire

Assyrian rule over Mesopotamian land was then undermined by the Babylonians who conquered Jerusalem and soon moved into northern Lebanon. In 585 BCE, Babylonians attacked Tyre from the land and besieged it for fourteen years. Then, in 538 BCE, present-day Lebanon fell to the Persians who added Lebanon to the expanding Persian Empire which encompassed Egypt and most of Western Asia. This led the remaining Phoenicians to lose all major colonies on Lebanese soil (Malaspina, 2009).

1.2.2 Rule of Alexander the Great

Persian rule soon came to an end with Alexander the Great. Born in 356 BCE to the King of Macedonia, Philip II, Alexander was tutored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. He inherited the Macedonian kingdom after his father's assassination in 336 BCE, consolidated his control over Greece, and moved to Asia to overcome the Persians. Three years later, in 333 BCE, Alexander the Great led his troops into the regions of modern Lebanon and Syria, where he triumphed over the forces of the Persian Empire (Malaspina, 2009). Alexander's siege of Tyre lasted seven months, during which his soldiers reportedly killed around 2000 residents and sold the remaining inhabitants into slavery. Subsequently, Alexander aimed to conquer the South; he led his troops to Egypt only to die of an unknown illness in Babylon in 323 BCE at only 33 years of age (Malaspina, 2009).

1.3 The Seleucid Dynasty

Following Alexander's death, the Macedonian empire was divided among its inhabitants. Seleucus, founder of the Seleucid dynasty, ruled over the eastern part—Phoenicia, Asia Minor, northern Syria, and Mesopotamia. The southern part of Syria and Egypt fell to Ptolemy, and the

European part of Macedonia, including Macedonia itself, fell to Antigonus I. However, this settlement failed to yield peace, as Seleucus I and Ptolemy clashed for forty years over their ambition to control Phoenician wealth. Eventually, the Seleucids' victory ended the forty-year conflict.

The settlement, however, failed to bring peace because Seleucus I and Ptolemy clashed repeatedly in the course of their ambitious efforts to benefit from Phoenician prosperity. A final victory of the Seleucids ended a forty-year period of conflict (Collelo, 1989; Malaspina, 2009). Furthermore, Seleucid rule came to an end in 64 BCE, when Syria and Lebanon were added to the Roman Empire by general Pompey (Collelo, 1989). During the Pax Romana, the economic and intellectual activities in Lebanon flourished and the inhabitants of former Phoenician cities (Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre) were granted Roman citizenship as the cities retained their prominence in production and trade. Phoenician cities under the Roman Empire became centers for pottery, glass, and purple dye industries. Additionally, their harbors exported cedar, perfume, jewelry, wine, and fruit to Rome, and they also served as warehouses for imported products from Syria, Persia, and India (Collelo, 1989). This economic prosperity allowed the Romans to improve urban development. They built temples and palaces throughout the land and paved roads to link cities and ease logistics (Collelo, 1989).

1.4 Arab Period

1.4.1 The Arab Conquest 634–636 CE

The Arab conquest of the Roman Empire began in 632 CE when the followers of the Prophet Muhammad embarked on a movement of religious and political expansion. Their mission was based in the Arabian Peninsula and moved towards the eastern Mediterranean with the determination to conquer more land through a call for jihad (a holy war) against non-Muslims. Caliph Abu Bakr, who aided in the call for Jihad, contributed to the spread of Islam in the area surrounding

Lebanon by dividing his forces. One group was sent in the direction of Palestine, the second towards Damascus, and the third towards the Jordan River (Collelo, 1989). Ultimately, the troops led by General Khalid ibn al-Walid conquered the Arab groups in 636 at the battle of Yarmuk in northwestern Jordan (Collelo, 1989).

1.5 The Umayyads 660–750 CE

In the second half of the seventh century CE, an Islamic Arab group known as the 'Umayyad elite' established an empire in Bilad al-Sham. Also known as the Roman Orients or the Holy Land, Bilad al-Sham, which comprised modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, was governed by Muawiyah in 640 CE. (Rabbat, 2003). Thus, by the time of his death in 680 CE, Muawiyah had already established a strong Muslim and Umayyad identity in the region for the Umayyad family to inherit (Lebovits, 2020). Anjar was established in the time of Caliph Walid ibn Abd Al-Malak (705–715 CE) during the Umayyad era, and serves as a remarkable example of Umayyad society. Anjar served as an inland commercial hub, situated at the intersection of two major roads: one connecting Beirut and Damascus, and the other crossing the Bekaa and connecting Homs with Tiberias. Archaeologists discovered the site of this ancient city in the late 1940s (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2024).

1.6 The Abbasids 750–1258 CE

Troubled by internal quarrels, the Umayyad Empire was destroyed by the Abbasids in 750 CE, who legitimized their right to rule by tracing their relationship back to the Prophet's uncle (Lenz-Raymann, 2014). The Abbasids derived their military force from troops in Central Asia with whom they had established a treaty of allegiance in times of threatening internal quarrels (Lenz-Raymann, 2014).

The Abbasids' rule was known for its harshness as they treated Lebanon and Syria as conquered territories leading to internal revolutions; one of which was the rebellion of Lebanese mountaineers in 759 CE. (Collelo, 1989).

1.7 The Crusades 1095–1291 CE

Originating from the Latin West, the Crusades were a foreign concept for the Byzantines (Theron & Oliver, 2018). The occupation of Christian holy places in Palestine combined with the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher by Caliph Al Hakim resulted in eight campaigns, know as the Crusades, led by Christians of Western Europe to recover the Holy Land from Muslim rule (Collelo, 1989). Pope Urban II announced the first Crusade in 1095 during the Council of Clermont-Ferrand in France. Following the capture of Jerusalem, the Crusaders focused on the Lebanese shoreline. Tripoli fell in 1109; Beirut and Sidon surrendered in 1110. Tyre firmly held out but ultimately surrendered in 1124 following an extended siege (Collelo, 1989). To execute their plan, the Crusaders built a series of fortresses along the Levantine coast. The series stretched from Gaza in the south to Alexandretta (present-day Turkey) to the north. In Lebanon alone, historians have catalogued around 44 castles and forts, most of which have either been lost to natural elements or shattered by centuries of use as military strongholds (Renahan, 2000).

1.8 The Mamluks 1282–1516 CE

The thirteenth century was marked by bitter conflicts between the different regional and ethnic groups in Lebanon and Syria. The crusaders from Europe, the Mongols from Central Asia's steppes, and the Mamluks from Egypt all aimed to dominate the region. In this complex struggle for dominance, the Mamluks ultimately prevailed (Collelo, 1989). Mamluks succeeded in confronting the Crusades and in liberating all the Islamic regions that were under the Crusader rule (Asbridge, 2012). In 1260 CE, Lebanon came under Mamluk rule who were initially limited to

Bekaa areas and the Tanukhiyan western regions (Kanaan, n.d.). During this era, Lebanon was divided into three parts and deputies, the largest of which was the northern district (the fourth deal for Damascus) with Baalbek at its base (Kanaan, n.d.). Among these districts was Bekaa whose base was at Karak Noah (Kanaan, n.d.). Sidon, however, which was a wilaya at the time, included Sidon city and Jabal al-Chouf. Similarly, Wilayat Beirut included Beirut city, Jabal al-Gharb, al-Matn and the greater part of Jabal (mount) Kesrouan (Kanaan, n.d.). In 1291, the Egyptian Mamluks conquered the city of Acre. The loss of Acre came to signify the end of the crusades into the eastern Mediterranean from the Latin West (Pretzer, 2024).

1.9 Ottoman Rule Period

1.9.1 The Maans 1120–1697 CE

The Maans initially gained recognition during the Mamluk era; in 1120, the governor of Damascus ordered the Maan family to move to Lebanon to aid the defense forces against the Crusaders (Collelo, 1989). They settled on the southwestern slopes of the Lebanese Mountains and adopted the Druze religion while serving their mission (Collelo, 1989). Soon after, the Ottoman authorities permitted Fakhr Ad Din I to organize his own army in Mount Lebanon. Fakhr Ad Din's rise to power allowed the Maan family to gain more power and control in the area. However, their authority only reached its peak with Fakhr Ad Din II in 1570 who established the early foundations of a Lebanese state under Ottoman rule (Collelo, 1989; Nedelcu, 2013). Prince Fakhr Ad Din II created the Chouf Emirate, enlarged it, and surrounded himself with Christian, Druze, and Muslim advisors who helped him annex Bekaa, Sidon, the Keserwan area, and Beirut (Nedelcu, 2013).

1.9.2 Emirate of Mount Lebanon 1523–1842 CE

The Emirate of Mount Lebanon, founded in 1523 CE, started before the conclusion of the Maans' reign in 1697 CE. The history of the Emirate of Mount Lebanon can be summarized

through Fakhr Ad Din II's integration of the entirety of Mount Lebanon under its authority and its expansion toward the regions of Palestine and the Syrian hinterland (Traboulsi, 2012). Within his Emirate, Fakhr Ad Din developed a set of characteristics that greatly impacted Lebanon as a modern-day country: The Emirate included a sizeable Christian majority; the region became renowned for its silk production and international trade; the Emirate benefited from exposure to European culture and intervention in times of internal conflicts (Traboulsi, 2012). Additionally, the Emirate of Mount Lebanon ran according to the iqta' system under the Ottoman rule. This system allowed the implementation of tax farming rights in mountainous or desert areas ethnic/tribal chiefs under the Ottoman rule. However, the holder of the iqta' (the muqata'ji families) enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy in running the logistics of their iqta' on the condition of providing the High Porte (in Istanbul) with the agreed amount of money and armed men in times of conflict (Traboulsi, 2012).

Therefore, life in Ottoman Mount Lebanon was characterized by the divisions and conflicts shared across the different regions of the Empire. For instance, Ottoman subjects were religiously divided, creating a two-tier hierarchy, with Muslims having the upper hand. The second community consisted of Christians and Jews who were allowed to practice their religious beliefs upon the payment of a recurring protection tax, the jizya (Traboulsi, 2012). This distinction created a social and economic division of labor, whereby Christians and Jews tended to specialize in commerce, finance, and handicrafts. In Mount Lebanon, this unequivocal religious dissection expressed itself through the Druze community's tribal-warrior structure, which functioned in contrast to the Christian community, which was dominated by commoners and a peasant base (Traboulsi, 2012). The apparent imbalance resulted in transforming the social/political conflicts into deeply rooted sectarian issues (Traboulsi, 2012). Additionally, the Muqata'ji economic power was not limited to tax farming. Their authority extended to land control and leasing to peasant sharecroppers. In Mount

Lebanon, for example, landlord-peasant relationships generated conflicts over rent and land ownership leading to frequent violent peasant revolts. Furthermore, Muqata'ji families engaged in conflict with each other. They competed within each other for power and control of an iltizam (a tax-farming concession) was a natural outcome of the iltizam system (Traboulsi, 2012).

Moving on, the established division between ranking orders (manasib) and commoners ('amma) raised issues regarding taxation and political participation among commoners. Orders held hereditary titles like emir, muqaddam, and sheikh that were bestowed upon their families by either the ruling emir of the Mountain, the Ottoman wali, or even the Sultan himself. Whereas the commoners carried no titles and had no means of acquiring them (Traboulsi, 2012).

1.9.3 The Shihabs 1697–1842 CE

After the conclusion of the Maans' rule in 1697 CE, the Shihabs ascended to power and ruled until 1842 CE. The early period of the Shihab rule can be characterized by Bashir Shihab I's attempts to follow in Fakhr Ad Din's footsteps by extending the Chouf Emirate to Jabal 'Amil and Palestine (Traboulsi, 2012). During this time, Mount Lebanon was politically marginalized as the Ottoman Pashas of Sidon, Acre, and Damascus exercised direct rule over the region (Traboulsi, 2012). The Shihab family, who were Sunni Muslims, shared power with the Abillama family. Towards the end of the 18th century, they converted to Christianity with Emir Bashir Shihab becoming the first Maronite Christian governing prince in the region in 1788 (Nedelcu, 2013). Later, Bashir II Shihab was appointed by the Ottomans as the last Prince of Mount Lebanon followed by Omar Pasha, an Ottoman army officer, who became the governor of the area in 1842 CE. (Nedelcu, 2013).

1.9.4 Lebanon Under Egyptian Rule 1831–1840 CE

Upon breaking away from the Ottoman Empire, Bashir II formed an alliance with Muhammad Ali, the founder of modern Egypt. He assisted his son, Ibrahim Pasha, in besieging Acre over a period of seven months that ended with the city falling on May 27, 1832, CE (Collelo, 1989). A few weeks later, on June 14, 1832, the Egyptian army with the assistance of Bashir's troops attacked and conquered Damascus.

Together, Ibrahim Pasha and Bashir II imposed harsh laws and high taxes, leading to numerous revolts that eventually ended their reign. Despite their efforts to control the land, the Maronites and Druze united against the Egyptians in 1840. They were accompanied by the principal European powers (Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia) who opposed the pro-Egyptian French policy and signed the London Treaty with the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman ruler) on July 15, 1840. As per their agreement, Muhammad Ali was ordered to leave Syria. However, Muhammad Ali rejected these orders, which led Ottoman and British troops to venture towards the Lebanese coast on September 10, 1840, pressuring him to retreat. A month later, Bashir II surrendered to the British and went into exile (Collelo, 1989).

1.9.5 The Civil War Between the Maronites and the Druzes (1860)

In the mid-19th century, a series of conflicts flared in modern-day Lebanon, which eventually led to severe clashes between the Maronites and the Druzes that evolved into three distinguishable uprisings of 1820, 1840, and 1857 which in turn culminated in the massacres of 1860 (Therriault & Denton, 2011). The reasoning behind the conflicts are said to have arisen from Druzes' fear that the competition between the Great Powers would give Maronite Christians a stronger power base in Mount Lebanon (Therriault & Denton, 2011). These conflicts between Druze and Christians brought with them the end of the governance of the Lebanese area by local

emirs like Shihab I and II. It was decided that an Ottoman 'mutasarrif' would be appointed to the region by the Empire with the approval of the above-mentioned five leading European countries (Reyhan, 2011).

1.9.6 Mutasarrifiya Mount Lebanon in 1861

The mutasarrifiya administrative regime was established in Mount Lebanon in 1861. The term 'Mount Lebanon' originally belonged to the northern ridges of a stretch of mountains and hills along the Mediterranean coast from the Barid River in the north to the Zahrani River in the south. Eventually, however, the name came to refer to the mountain range as a whole; and when the mutasarrifiya regime was established it became common to refer to this area as Mount Lebanon, or 'The Mountain' to reflect unity (Akarli, 1993).

Before the Mutasarrifiya, Mount Lebanon was divided into Qa'im maqamiya: a partition of Mount Lebanon into two political and administrative regions, each overseen by a Qa'im maqam (1842–61) (Traboulsi, 2012). The reorganization of the Qa'im maqamiya, referred to as the règlement of Shekib Effendi, should be primarily acknowledged as the formalization of sectarian political representation in Mount Lebanon. Every Qa'im maqamiya was provided with a council to aid in tax collection and the administration of justice. Every council, led by a Qa'im maqam, included twelve members: one councilor and one judge for each of the six religious groups: Maronite, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Sunni Muslim, and Shii Muslim (Traboulsi, 2012). The Règlement organique of June 9, 1861, provided Mount Lebanon with restricted autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, assured by European powers: France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with Italy joining in 1867. The new entity combined the two Qa'im maqamiyas from 1841 to 1861 into a Mutasarrifiya, marking the initial subdivision of a wilaya—primary Ottoman administrative

division, governed by a wali. A wilaya is segmented into several sanjaks, which in turn are divided into multiple nahiyas (Traboulsi, 2012).

The placement of Mutasarrifiyat Jabal Lubnân regime was initiated after the 1860 civil war and lasted until the establishment of Greater Lebanon under the French Mandate in 1920. Although Mount Lebanon had limited autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, the years under the mutasarrifiya regime remain known as a tranquil period and one of the longest spans of internal peace in Lebanon's modern history given the silk-driven economic growth, peasant movement to outside Mount Lebanon, and the limited European power intervention (Akarli, 1993).

The local political division of the Mutasarrifiya was structured as follows: A Christian Mutasarrif appointed by the Sublime Porte would directly govern the Sanjak of Lebanon. He would be head of the Central Administrative Council which would include twelve members, equally divided across Maronites, Druzes, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, and Matawilahs (another name for Lebanese Shiites) (Reyhan, 2011). Furthermore, the Sanjak (a segment of a wilaya, governed by an emir liwa' or a sanjak bey [Traboulsi, 2012]) of Lebanon would be divided into seven kazas—a subdivision of sanjak and referring to the basic administrative district—each with its local council and administrative representative picked by the governor as per recommendations of the chief of jurisdiction. Additionally, mixed communities would have separate representatives known as heads of sub districts and appointed by the Mutasarrif based on the recommendations of the Chief of the Kaza. Sheikhs appointed by the Mutasarrif would govern villages and in the case of mixed communities, the above-mentioned procedure would also apply. Thus, everyone would be considered equal before the law (Reyhan, 2011). Per the above regulations, Daoud Pasha, a Christian, was the first of eight governors to rule Lebanon until the outbreak of the First World War. His rule brought cultural and economic wealth to Beirut (Nedelcu, 2013).

1.10 Lebanon During World War I– 1914–1918

With its outbreak in August 1914, World War I added further challenges to Lebanon as Turkey formed alliances with Germany, Austria, and Hungary. To maintain control, Turkey abolished Lebanon's semi-autonomous status, assigning Navy Minister Jamal Pasha as the commander in chief of the Turkish forces in Syria. Jamal Pasha militarily occupied Lebanese land and replaced its Armenian Mutasarrif with Munif Pasha, a Turk (Collelo, 1989). Later in February 1915, Jamal Pasha suffered an unsuccessful attack on the British forces in the Suez Canal. His frustration led him to initiate a blockade on the eastern Mediterranean coast to prevent supplies from reaching his enemies. His tactic resulted in thousands of deaths, as well as plague and famine in several Ottoman provinces (Collelo, 1989).

The inhabitants of Beirut and Mount Lebanon suffered extreme hunger on which Harissa Al Sayigh reported in his daily entries on the famine, painting the drastic circumstances in the region. In March 1915, he wrote, "Hunger has begun to injure the people with its sharp claws […] Especially the poor and middle classes are finding difficulty in purchasing grain". A year later in July, "Nothing was cheap except people, who were dying not by the tens, but by the hundreds". In August, he estimated 500 deaths per day in Mount Lebanon. By November he said, "All the poor people have died." By the end of that year, it was estimated that 80,000 individuals had perished– equating to around 18% of the province's total population. Throughout the next two years, famine impacted all sectors in both Lebanon and Syria. Al-Sayigh estimated a total population of 150,000 Lebanese dead (Pitts, 2020).

1.11 French Mandate till Lebanon's Independence – 1920–1943

1.11.1 French Mandate in Lebanon

During World War I, François Georges-Picot of France and Mark Sykes of Britain collaborated due to their shared appreciation of the region's significance to the West. They convened in secret (unknown to other nations until 1917) to split the Ottoman Empire, which was on the verge of collapse. On November 23, 1915, the Sykes-Picot agreement was signed, granted France direct sovereignty over Lebanon, coastal Syria, and southeast Anatolia, while maintaining a sphere of influence across inland Syria (Damascus and Aleppo) (Baun, 2008). Whereas what is now known as Jordan and Iraq would fall under British rule. These divisions took into consideration the region's history with European diplomacy (Bashshur, 1964). By April 1920, British and French representatives met with representatives of several international powers at the San Remo Conference to solidify the Sykes-Picot Agreement with the exception of some revisions that gained France full and direct possession over Syria (Baun, 2008). In July, French troops invaded Damascus, ending King Faysal's authority over the country; a month later, in August, all decisions were finalized at the Treaty of Sèvres and the French became unofficial rulers of Syria and Lebanon leaving Mesopotamia to the British (Baun, 2008).

Looking back at the French Mandate, many deem it partially successful. Over the years, France managed to initiate the modernization process of the state; it enforced law and order, opened highways and roads that eased transportation and increased government efficiency, introduced public schools and a public finance system, in addition to establishing revolutionary methods of land survey and registration (Khoury, 1968). However, its failure resulted from its inability to fully grasp the purpose of the Mandate; French troops treated the country as a primitive colony

belonging to their nation, which inevitably fostered resentment and resistance within the population (Khoury, 1968).

1.11.2 Great Lebanon

Upon signing the Treaty of Sèvres on August 10, 1920, which placed the Ottoman Empire under supervision, General Gouraud proclaimed the creation of Great Lebanon on September 1, 1920. Its territory included the ancient Mutasarrifiya of Mount Lebanon, the coastal cities (Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre), and the cereal-producing regions of the Bekaa and Jabal ‘Amil, north of Galilee. This left Lebanon with a predominantly Muslim regional composition with the exception of Beirut; this created an equal demographic of Christians and Muslims in Greater Lebanon (Jaulin, 2009).

In 1922, Greater Syria was split into a federation of four states, divided by religious and ethnic cultures: Damascus, Aleppo, Alawite, and Jabal El Druze. Later in 1923, French rule gained legitimacy when the League of Nations approved the mandate over Syria and Lebanon which gave France the role of the final imperial administrator for the following twenty years (Bashshur, 1964; Baun, 2008). France accepted its responsibility as a Mandatory Power entrusted with Lebanon and Syria and exercised its mandate on behalf of the League of Nations to whom the French annually reported on the situation and its administrative role in the region (Khoury, 1968). Subsequently, in 1924 French authorities decided to settle and naturalize Armenian refugees in Syria and Lebanon to the dismay of Muslim politicians in both countries. In Lebanon, Emile Edde strongly supported the decision in an attempt to increase the number of Christians in the country (Khoury, 1968).

Throughout the mandate period, contact with the West was intensified and urbanization grew rapidly, introducing new values and ideas to both Lebanon and Syria (Bashshur, 1964). One of the several reforms introduced was the introduction of modern governance; for the first time in

Lebanese and Syrian history, the two countries had their own presidents, parliaments, and representative councils. Although they were mostly ineffective as the French High Commissioner had the dominant authority in the countries' affairs, the introduction of modern governance was a rather important step (Bashshur, 1964). Other than governance, the French Mandate added several values to the Lebanese system. In 1924, for instance, they sponsored a brand-new system of public education based on a ministry of public instruction and a system of administrative procedures governed by a set of regulations for primary schools and regular teacher training. The goal behind this initiative was to instill education into the Lebanese culture while also accelerating the acculturation process (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999).

1.11.3 Lebanese Republic 1926; 1932 Census

In 1926, Greater Lebanon was renamed the 'Lebanese Republic' according to the final version of the constitutional text issued on May 26, 1926; it adopted French as the official language alongside Arabic and was approved by the representative council created in 1922 (Rondot, 1979; Traboulsi, 2012). Additionally, the High Commissioner de Jouvenel implemented the settlement and naturalization of the French nationals in both Syria and Lebanon, which were treated as a single economic unit monopolized by the Common Interests (Intérêts Communs) and the franchise-holding societies (Sociétés Concessionaires), two sets of French companies, that ruled over all public services and the main economic sectors.

The constitution of Lebanon was adopted to establish a governance model based on confessionalism and religious agreement (Prados, 2006). Per the constitution, a president would be elected by the parliament for a non-renewable six-year term, and he would appoint a prime minister and cabinet. Lastly, the parliament would be elected by universal adult suffrage over a four-year term. Parliamentary composition would vary according to the electoral laws promulgated prior to

each election and unlike the president, the prime minister and cabinet ought to receive a vote of confidence from the parliament to validate their positions (Prados, 2006). On November 24, 1931, Lebanon's president, Charles Dabbas, signed a law to conduct a census of all citizens on Lebanese land. On December 19, another law was enacted, stating that the enumeration law applies to both inhabitants and emigrants. Decree No. 8837, issued on January 15, 1932, established criteria for the census of Lebanese inhabitants and emigrants (Maktabi, 1999). The planning, execution, and administration of the 1932 census are little known. However, even tiny fragments of the official records provide important insight into the final results, which was published on October 5, 1932, in the Official Gazette (al-Jarida al-Rasmiyya). The 1932 census served as the foundation for both the personal registration of Lebanese emigrants and residents of Lebanon, and it also served as one of the main pillars of the state's citizenship laws, both of which were essential to the state's continuous state-building process. These two processes often converge in the formation of new nations, as is the case in many newly independent states and Third World countries. Based on the 1932 census, the Pact reinforced the political elite's perception of Lebanon as a Christian nation (Maktabi, 1999).

On the November 13, 1936, Lebanon and France signed a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance that was approved – without opposition – by the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies. According to the treaty, France recognized Lebanon as an independent state that required its help in joining the League of Nations and constant military aid in cases of third-party invasion (Traboulsi, 2012). In return, Lebanon pledged to maintain French capital, interests, and monetary parity between both countries, and pledged full alliance with France in the event of war. It is also worth noting that although Lebanon was recognized as an independent state with its own army, France was to maintain its military presence (for Levantine troops) and would benefit from acess to transportation

infrastruction on account of its relentless advice and technical military aid (Traboulsi, 2012). Despite these improvements, the Lebanese population seemed to struggle logistically. The Maronite Christians who were for long regarded as France's loyal base, felt economically constraimed by the French administration that constantly monitored the ports, inspected shipping activity, and interfered in commercial transactions for their own benefit (Traboulsi, 2012).

1.11.4 Lebanon During World War II (1939–1945), Lebanon's Independence, and the Constitution of Its National Pact in 1943

In 1940, the Vichy government assumed power in France and General Henri-Fernand Dentz was appointed as Lebanon's high commissioner. On April 4, 1941, Emile Edde resigned as head of state, thus, Dentz appointed Alfred Naccache as his replacement. However, the Vichy government lost control a few months later as the French and British troops advanced further into Lebanon and Syria (Collelo, 1989).

On July 14, 1941, a truce (the Acre Armistice) was signed, followed by a visit from General Charles de Gaulle that officially ended Vichy control over the region. Lebanon's national leaders asked de Gaulle to end the French Mandate in Lebanon and officially recognize the country as a fully independent state (Collelo, 1989). The national and international pressure to recognize the state of Lebanon resulted in General Georges Catroux, the delegate general under de Gaulle, proclaiming Lebanon's independence on November 26, 1941, in the name of the French government. Following this recognition, the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, the Arab states, and certain Asian countries also recognized Lebanon as an independent state and exchanged ambassadors with Beirut. However, the French did not relinquish their political and military authority over Lebanon (Collelo, 1989). On September 21, 1943, the new Chamber of Deputies elected Bechara El Khoury as president; he selected Riyad Al Solh as prime minister and tasked him with forming the

first government of an independent Lebanon. On November 8, 1943, the Chamber of Deputies amended the Constitution; they abolished articles referring to the mandate and modified those specifying the powers of the high commissioner. In response, the French authorities arrested some of Lebanon's prominent political figures—including the president, prime minister, and members of the cabinet—to send them into exile in the Castle of Rashayya, an act that united Christian and Muslim leaders who were determined to end the French Mandate. On November 22, 1943, the prisoners at Rashayya were released marking the day as Lebanon's official Independence Day (Collelo, 1989).

The National Pact of 1943 became the basis for Lebanese governance prior to the civil war and Taif Agreement which was constructed based on the 1932 census statistics. The Pact awarded a 6-5 Christian-Muslim ratio in the Lebanese legislature, the presidency to the Maronites, the prime ministry to the Sunnis, and the speakership of parliament to the Shiites. Hence, it could be said that the Pact sought a balance between sectarian and ideological conflicts in the country aiming to maintain Lebanon's independence. However, the Pact was not formalized in writing; it was accepted as an implicit agreement that guided Lebanese politics (Larkin, 2011).

1.12 Lebanese Crisis in 1958

As the newly independent countries maneuvered their way in a postwar world, the region was constantly affected by the rise of local nationalism and the ongoing Cold War between the East and the West (Shulimson, 1966).

In 1948, the Jews and Arabs clashed in what is now known as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 leading to a lasting antagonism between the two (Shulimson, 1966). The conflict between the Jewish state of Israel and its Arab neighbors has become a defining element of Middle Eastern politics. This enmity was intensified by Egypt's 1952 revolution and the subsequent rise to power in 1954

of its most powerful figure, Gamal Abdul Nasser. As a result of his leadership, a new regional hegemony emerged. Arab instability resulted in civil unrest in Lebanon and the 1958 overthrow of a Western-aligned Iraqi government. The Western Powers were concerned about the full break-down of the Middle East peace process, as well as the likelihood of Soviet exploitation of the crisis. The direct American response was to send U.S. Marines to Lebanon on July 15, 1958, at the request of the Lebanese government. This Marine landing demonstrated the strategic use of amphibious troops to advance U.S. foreign policy through military presence and mobility (Shulimson, 1966).

1.13 Series of Events that Led to the Lebanese Civil War in 1975

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Lebanon's unrest increased due to political and ideological disagreements in neighboring Arab countries. These conflicts exploited Lebanon's democratic system and caused internal disagreements, which allowed some Arab countries to project their own conflicts onto Lebanese territory. In Lebanon, Nasserism, a Pan-Arab nationalist ideology that was anti-Western, became more popular, leading to increased political conflict among Arab countries and creating divisions among Lebanese religious groups (Faksh, 1984).

The Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967 had remarkable consequences for Lebanon, influencing its political environment, security status, and population composition.

1.13.1 Arab-Israeli Conflict in 1967 and its Effect on Lebanon

The Six-Day War was a historic event in Palestinian history. Prior to the conflict, the Palestinian resistance against Israel was mostly led by Arab governments. These governments were concerned that Palestinian activities might lead to war with Israel and therefore attempted to monitor and manage them to a certain extent. After the Arab governments were defeated in 1967, the

Palestinians realized they needed to rely on themselves. They fought Israel from two primary bases: Jordan (until September 1970) and Lebanon (El-Khazen, 2000)

The Palestinians found Lebanon to be an ideal base of operations. The Lebanese regime lacked effective control over its borders with Israel. Furthermore, this territory was on the Lebanese perimeter, and the Lebanese government neglected and ignored it. Palestinian organizations were prevalent in South Lebanon, particularly in the southeastern border triangle of Israel, Syria, and Lebanon (Kaufman, 2004). The Palestinian activities split Lebanese society and politics into two camps: supporters and opponents. The majority of Palestinian sympathizers, who were Muslims, saw it as Lebanon's contribution to the Arab Anti-Israeli campaign. The Maronite Christians opposed Lebanon's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. They aimed to retain Lebanese sovereignty across Lebanon and control Palestinian operations from Lebanon. Both camps were unable to push their agendas without causing a political crisis in Lebanon (Naor & Lewin, 2020).

Following an Israeli military strike on Beirut International Airport on December 28, 1968, in response to a Palestinian terror attack, there were protests in Beirut in favor of the Palestinians and criticism of the Lebanese government's inability to defend the country. The Lebanese government resigned and a new one was established. The establishment of a new administration did not alleviate the situation, demonstrations continued, and Lebanese security forces attempted to quell rallies, while the army started attacking Palestinian organizations to enforce state sovereignty. Following these military actions, the new administration was forced to resign. Bloody skirmishes between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians continued intermittently between May and October 1969, while there was no stable government in Beirut (Naor & Lewin, 2020). After the skirmishes, the PLO and the Lebanese army signed an accord. Egypt brokered the agreement, which

was signed in Cairo on November 3, 1969. Hence, it became known as the Cairo Agreement (Naor & Lewin, 2020).

1.13.2 The Cairo Agreement in 1969

The Cairo Agreement formalized Lebanon's relations with the Palestinians. The official framework for ties between Lebanon and the Palestinians was established by this pact. It claimed that Palestinian organizations could travel to and from the Israeli border with permission from the Lebanese government. In order to foster collaboration, it further stated that representatives of Palestinian groups would have frequent meetings with Lebanese military officers. Additionally, the agreement stated that the Lebanese government would have no control over the Palestinian organizations' establishment of their own military bases within the nation's refugee camps. Finally, it was prohibited for the Palestinian groups to get involved in the Lebanese politics (Naor & Lewin, 2020). Accepting the Cairo Agreement gave the PLO legitimacy, gave it command over the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and enabled the PLO guerrillas to launch short-range attacks on Israel. The Palestinians were able to launch direct strikes against Israel primarily from Lebanon. Because of the several Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, the PLO was able to assemble and equip Palestinian guerrillas for raids into Israel from Lebanon (Saseen, 1990).

For Lebanon, the Palestinian resistance had catastrophic consequences. For instance, the sizeable Palestinian population increased Muslim influence and strained relations between Israel and Lebanon. Additionally, the Palestinian refugee camps provided assistance to the Palestinians, resulting in tense ties with the Lebanese government and Lebanon's Maronite neighbors (Saseen, 1990). The Lebanese army commander during that time, General Jean Njeim, declared that Lebanon could not move against the Palestinians for fear of being destroyed and upsetting the Arab

governments (Naor & Lewin, 2020). The Lebanese right-wing parties rejected the Cairo Agreement, as represented by the Lebanese National Bloc Party, the National Liberal Party, and the Phalanges Party. In response to this agreement, the tripartite alliance called for a general strike. Patriarch Paul Meouchi claimed that the Cairo Agreement was a concession made by President Charles Helou. After the agreement, the Palestinian resistance, with all its factions, established bases and maintained a presence in most of the Palestinian camps. Training of fighters began, and the number of armed men from the Palestinian revolution factions after the agreement reached five thousand. The Palestinian revolutionary factions became stronger than before. After this stage, the living conditions of Palestinians improved, so social institutions were established, and a large number of young people joined Palestinian organizations (Al-Shammari, 2022). The secret Cairo Agreement caused contradictions amongvarious groups of the Lebanese people. Some of them considered that it undermined Lebanese sovereignty and gave Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), a state within the state. President Charles Helou responded to this by stating, "As for my approval, it was a choice of the best option because the country was on the verge of civil war" (Al-Shammari, 2022).

Lebanon found itself at an impasse; matters only became worse after September 1970, when King Hussein of Jordan suppressed Palestinian groups within his territory. These groups relocated to Lebanon, which became the primary base for Palestinian activities (Naor & Lewin, 2020). While their activities were purportedly aimed at keeping the Palestinian cause alive and continuing the campaign to recover Palestine, these groups' presence in Lebanon became permanently linked to Lebanese internal politics. The domestic and regional political agendas could barely be distinguished. Palestinian groups used the political system's flaws to strengthen their political and military positions. To achieve this goal, they formed partnerships with dissatisfied

Lebanese sectarian (primarily Muslim) and nonsectarian political organizations, as well as other groups that saw such an alliance as a way to compel the Maronite elite to support political change. The intended reforms vary amongst Lebanese political groups (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005). Leftist and other non-establishment movements sought major changes to make the institution less confessional. Traditional Muslim organizations want to change the sectarian formula in order to ensure a more equitable allocation of power within the Muslim community (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005).

On May 21, 1987, the Lebanese National Assembly decided to repeal the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which outlined and governed the PLO's operations and gave legitimacy to its presence in Lebanon. The Lebanese government would no longer approve of PLO activities in Lebanon as a result of its abrogation (Saseen, 1990).

1.14 Palestinian Power in Lebanon

In 1973, Israel launched attacks against Palestinians in Lebanon, causing significant disruption to the country's political stability. On February 21, 1973, Israeli forces landed on the shore near Tripoli and raided two Palestinian refugee camps, Nahr al-Barid and Baddawi, with little resistance from the Lebanese army. 31 civilians were killed, with 60 more injured. In April 1973, Israeli commandos struck the PLO in Beirut. Four Lebanese citizens and forty Palestinian refugees in Beirut were killed. The Verdun operation resulted in the assassination of three high-ranking PLO officials (Ganley, 2012). Following such attacks, the Lebanese army was perceived as unable to sufficiently safeguard Palestinians in Lebanon (Siklawi, 2010). This further widened the political gap between the anti-Palestinian right and the pro-Palestinian left. The Maronites and the right regarded the Israeli strikes as an opportunity to rewrite the Cairo Agreement and evict the PLO from Lebanon, as Jordan had done. Left-wing groups and Palestinians called for the resignation of

the Lebanese government and President Frangieh, accusing them of permitting Israeli attacks on Palestinians (Ganley, 2012).

In March 1973, Palestinian guerrillas attacked a Lebanese army position in the south, resulting in the deaths of two Lebanese Army soldiers. In May, Palestinian guerrillas abducted three army troops (El-Khazen, 2000). In reprisal, the Lebanese army encircled Palestinian settlements outside Beirut, capturing and detaining many Palestinians. Armed conflict erupted between the army and Palestinian guerrilla groups. The Lebanese army grew increasingly aggressive toward Palestinian refugee camps, viewing them as operational bases for guerrilla groups and the PLO (Siklawi, 2010). The Lebanese army and air force shelled Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, including Burj al-Barajina near the airport. Similar conflicts happened between the Lebanese army and Palestinians in the south. The attack on Burj al-Barajina impacted both Palestinians and Shiite populations, which made them more hostile toward the right-wing Lebanese government (Ganley, 2012).

1.15 The Outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975

The Lebanese Civil War began in 1975 due to internal and foreign reasons that had been growing in the country since the Ottoman period and throughout the 20th century. The Palestinian element exacerbated tensions between political, socioeconomic, and sectarian factions in Lebanon, setting the stage for more conflict. The refusal of Palestinian groups to accept their marginalized social and political status after the establishment of Israel sparked a similar mentality in Lebanon's disadvantaged communities (Ganley, 2012). Shiites, in particular, sympathized with the Palestinians' situation due to their own marginalization and victimization within their own country and from Israeli assault. Political leftists were dissatisfied with Lebanon's government and societal systems. Support for the PLO and Palestinian guerrilla organizations was intended to undermine

the existing Lebanese political framework and establish a more representative government (Ganley, 2012). The political right in Lebanon, dominated by the Maronite Christian community, viewed Palestinian groups as a threat to their dominant position in government and society. They worried, above all, that a change in administration would erase their influence and leave them sidelined in a mostly Muslim territory dominated by Islamic culture. The PLO and guerrilla organizations' growing military capabilities drew support from Shiites and the left, while also posing a danger to the right, leading to attacks from both sides. The conflict further split Lebanon's already fractured population, thereby hindering peace and stability (Ganley, 2012).

Although the civil war broke out in 1975, its origins were deeply rooted in Lebanon's past. The internal problems were closely linked to the political confessional framework that has ruled the nation since its independence, established through the National Pact in 1943. The Civil War resulted in over 144,000 deaths, 184,000 injured, 13,000 kidnapped, and around 17,000 missing. Additionally, over 175 towns were partially or fully demolished and over 750,000 Lebanese people were displaced internally. The physical damage incurred was estimated at around $25 billion (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011).

1.16 Israel's First Occupation in 1978

In 1978, Israel launched one of its largest attacks in Lebanon when a group of PLO fighters infiltrated Israel from Lebanon. To prevent more PLO assaults, Israel invaded southern Lebanon (Gross, 1983). Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon, with an estimated 30,000 troops; the invasion began on the night of March 14–15, 1978. Israel stated that their major goal was to secure a 30–40 km area and to construct a 'Security Belt' zone spanning 7–10 kilometers. Several days later, the Israeli attack reached the Litani River as intended. Israel gained control of most

regions south of Litani, but was unable to enter Tyre. Following the 1978 invasion, Israel established a 'Security Belt' in southern Lebanon (Siklawi, 2017). This belt, created between 1978 and 1982, covered about 700 square kilometers and ranged in length from 80–85 kilometers and in depth from 4–12 kilometers. The belt decreased Palestinian military presence and activities from the Lebanese-Palestinian border, forcing the fida'iyin to evacuate from the occupied zone and establish new bases farther north (Siklawi, 2017). The Fida'i, the guerrilla fighter dedicated to sacrifice for the sake of collective struggle, stands as an iconic symbol of the principles, circumstances, and hopes of the Palestinian revolution (Qutami, 2022). After a month, Israel decided to withdraw from Lebanon in accordance with a UN agreement. This agreement created a UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon. This unit was responsible for policing the area and preventing PLO troops from returning to southern Lebanon. The United Nations army failed to stabilize the area, allowing the PLO to quickly return and reconstitute their strongholds in southern Lebanon (Gross, 1983). It was claimed that each attack was a form of retaliation for a commando operation carried out by the Palestinians across the Israeli-Lebanese border. The threat of retaliation persisted throughout the Israeli invasion of 1978. The Lebanese government reported that the Israeli invasion resulted in 1,100 deaths among Palestinians and Lebanese, primarily civilians, while the Israeli government labeled it a retaliatory response to the coastal road operation (Ryan, 1982). Despite Israel's efforts throughout the invasion, the Litani Operation was unsuccessful, as fida'iyin actions persisted and frequently resumed (Siklawi, 2017).

1.17 Israel's Second Occupation in 1982 and PLO Evacuation from Lebanon

The Israeli military faced a challenge while preparing the 1982 invasion: earlier triumphs on the ground, had not changed the PLO's military or political posture. Israel's military activity was limited due to political constraints. The war against the PLO was mostly political, rather than

military. The 1982 assault aimed to destroy the PLO and eliminate its role in the Middle East conflict (Sayigh, 1983). Israel attacked Lebanon on June 6, 1982. 'Operation Peace for Galilee' was declared to be a 48-hour operation similar to the 'Operation Litani' from 1978. Its declared objective was to drive the Palestinian militias out of southern Lebanon and destroy their defenses. The initial goal was to secure the election of a Maronite Christian administration led by Lebanese Forces Commander Bashir Gemayel in order to establish a new political order in Lebanon. Next, this newly formed government would formally negotiate a peace treaty with Israel (Schulze, 2009). Therefore, the complete expulsion of Palestinians from Lebanon was the second goal. This would eliminate the demographic threat posed to Lebanon's Christian population, eliminate the military threat posed by Palestinian guerrillas to Israel and Lebanon and hinder the PLO's attempts to establish a state. The third goal was to completely eliminate Palestinian nationalism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The defeat and withdrawal of Syrian forces, who had been stationed in Lebanon since 1976, was the fourth and last goal. The Israeli security interests no longer viewed Syria's position as advantageous, hence the Syrian military presence was necessary to cease (Schulze, 2009).

The PLO's problems allegedly began on June 3, 1982, when members of the 'Black June' renegade organization attempted to assassinate Israel's representative to the United Kingdom. Three days later, the incident gave Israel a pretext to invade Lebanon. Israeli forces quickly overran the PLO bases in Tyre and Sidon, two coastal towns, and by June 9 had reached Beirut's outskirts. They were waiting there, getting ready to launch a huge attack on the senior leaders and 2,100 PLO militants who were still besieged in the city. But because of the international pressure on Israel, the attack was postponed until August 19, when the Israelis and PLO eventually came to an

agreement on the departure of PLO soldiers from Beirut. The PLO soon started to evacuate the city, heading for one of eight Arab nations that had accepted to take them in (Hoffman, 1985). 'Operation Peace for Galilee', which was strongly rejected by the Lebanese state, deployed 120,000 Israeli soldiers into the Lebanese capital, Beirut, to eliminate the PLO. PLO and Israeli soldiers fought for control of West Beirut while 10,000 PLO and 30,000 Syrian and Arab League troops protected their positions in northeast Lebanon. The Israelis bombarded and destroyed several Lebanese towns and villages (Saseen, 1990).

1.18 Phase: 1982–1990

This period from June 1982 to October 1990 was known as one of the intense external interferences in Lebanon. This phase started with the Israeli invasion of June 6, 1982, and finished when the clashes ended a year after the agreement of Taif Accord in 1989 (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005). Israel tried to force a government throught the election of Bashir Gemayel as president by the Lebanese parliament on September 14, 1982. However, Gemayel was murdered before taking office. After this incident, Israeli soldiers invaded West Beirut and quickly captured it. After September 22, 1982, following the death of Bashir Gemayel, Amin Gemayel (lder sibling of Bashir Gemayel) was elected as president by the Lebanese parliament for a six-year term. Meanwhile, the United States, Britain, France, and Italy cooperated to send their troops to Lebanon to protect the refugee camps in the Beirut Area after the retreat of the PLO (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005). In the summer of 1983, this period witnessed ferocious fighting between the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese Forces in the Chouf Mountains. This war resulted in a mass departure of Christian residents from the Chouf area, demolition of Christian and Druze towns and villages, and the killing of civilians. Additionally, until February 6, 1984, the government of President Amin Gemayel had full authority over Greater Beirut. On this day, the Lebanese Army was obliged to leave

West Beirut, which came under the control of guerrillas and political parties opposed to the government (primarily the Progressive Socialist Party and the Amal Party). The civil conflicts between the two sides of Beirut (East and West) occurred again. Following 1984, the nominal and actual value of the Lebanese pound fell dramatically. In February 1987, Syrian soldiers returned to West Beirut at the request of officials in this area in order to uphold law and order and avoid conflicts between the militias (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005).

The year 1988 witnessed an unusual situation of having two governments as a result of the inability to elect a new president. President Amin Gemayel unilaterally appointed General Michel Aoun, the army commander, as the head of a council of ministers made up of the six members of the army command after his six-year tenure came to an end in September 1988 in the absence of an agreement on a successor. Three Muslims were selected to the council, but they declined to serve. By the time Gemayel's tenure ended, the current government still held itself to be the only valid government in the nation and refused to recognize the authority of the council he had established. As a result, two rival governments were born (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005). When Aoun visited Tunisia in February 1989 to attend an assembly of Arab foreign ministers, he was met with strong backing for the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty. Following his return, Aoun ordered the 15,000 Lebanese army personnel under his command to take action in response to provocations made by the Lebanese Forces militia (Gambill, 2001). On February 10, 1989, Aoun fought the Christian-based militia known as the Lebanese Forces (LF) and reclaimed Dock Five in Beirut Harbor, a key source of state revenue (Helou, 2019). Since the start of the civil war in 1975, this was the first time that government sovereignty was reinstated in a territory under militia control (Gambill, 2001).

Then, in West Beirut, Aoun imposed a naval blockade on unauthorized ports controlled by Druze and Shi'ite forces that were aligned with Syria. On March 14, 1989, the Syrians bombed civilian neighborhoods of East Beirut in retaliaton (Gambill, 2001). General Aoun announced the 'Liberation War' against the Syrian army that 'occupies Lebanon', indicating that "the battle for liberation has begun..." "And the ceasefire will be with the Syrian," and he went on to attack President Hafez al-Assad personally, by adding that the Syrian forces should withdraw from Lebanon. The 'port war' occurred at a time when the Syrian forces were preparing to 'take revenge' and restore their honor (Annahar, 2014).

Over the course of the following six months, the clashes between the armies of Syria and Lebanon devastated most of Beirut and forced over a one million people to flee the city (Gambill, 2001). On July 31, 1989, the Arab League Mediation Committee, which included the leaders of Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, proposed that the National Assembly meet in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to discuss constitutional reforms aimed at creating a fair legislative and executive system and equal opportunities for all Lebanese citizens. The Committee also called for the disbandment of militias and the expulsion of Israeli soldiers. On September 26, 1989, the Committee brokered a truce between Syrian/Druze/Amal forces and Lebanese Armed Forces/Lebanese Forces soldiers (Saseen, 1990).

1.19 End of the Lebanese Civil War: Taif Accord in 1989

The Taif Accord, otherwise known as the Document of National Reconciliation, was signed on October 22, 1989, in Taif Saudi Arabia. It was then endorsed by the Lebanese Parliament on November 5, 1989 (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011). Aoun remained in his Presidential Palace in Baabda and refused to recognize President René Mouawad, who was elected on November 5, 1989. When Mouawad was assassinated in a vehicle bomb on Independence Day (November 22,

1989), Aoun refused to acknowledge his replacement, Elias Hrawi, the deputy for Zahleh. The Syrian regime assumed full responsibility for executing the Agreement due to its emerging role as a regional power and postwar military presence in Lebanon. Syria used force to establish the deal in 1990, excluding Lebanese opposition, including key Christian leaders. They then dominated the implementation process (Karam, 2012).

The Accord introduced a few reforms to the political system through a power-sharing agreement that allowed Muslims a greater role in the political process. It suggested an equal power divide between the Christian and Muslim entities in the country (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011). The Taif Agreement changed the Christian-Muslim ratio in parliament from 55:45 to 50:50, raising the number of seats from 99 to 108 and eventually to 128 (Karam, 2012). The reforms suggested shifting powers from the president to the prime minister and the cabinet – to ensure equal portfolio divisions between Christians and Muslims. Additionally, the National Assembly and the division of the parliamentary seats were both equally distributed across both religious powers with fixed percentages for each sect within both religions (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011).

The Agreement focuses on two axes: internal reforms (power-sharing, participation, identity, political and socio-economic reform, sovereignty, and internal security), and external relations (Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Lebanese-Syrian relations) (Karam, 2012). Taif's updated Constitution was based on the first axis, which included over thirty modifications passed in September 1990. The first section, which states broad principles, has been approved as the Constitution's preamble, and it primarily addresses national identity, the nature of the political system, public liberties, the economic system, and territorial integrity (Karam, 2012). The second section has been included in relevant constitutional clauses. The document focuses on political reform and power-sharing, including redistributing prerogatives among the President,

Speaker, and Prime Minister, and eliminating political sectarianism (Karam, 2012). The third section focuses on 'other changes', including administrative decentralization, the establishment of a Constitutional Council, legislative electoral law, an Economic and Social Council for Development, education, information, and media reorganization. Some revisions have been included directly into Constitutional provisions, while others have been translated into legislation (Karam, 2012). Furthermore, the Accord strengthened the position of the Speaker of Parliament and aimed to extend and enhance governmental sovereignty over Lebanese territory by calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the dismantling of all militias (Ghosn & Khoury, 2011).

After the 'Liberation War' between 1989 and 1990 in which the Lebanese Army associated with General and Prime Minister Michel Aoun (appointed by former President Amine Gemayel) battled against the Syrian Armed Forces and the Lebanese Army related to President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Salim Al Huss (appointed by the Taif Agreement). General Michel Aoun began his last attack 'War of Elimination' against the Lebanese Forces of Geagea to punish the party's leader for supporting the Taif Agreement and acquire control of the Christian enclave. From January to May 1990, the struggle for 'unifying the guns', as it was dubbed, converted East Beirut and the heart of the Christian territory into an active battleground, severely split the Christians, and inflicted serious damage to their position in the country's sectarian balance of power (Traboulsi, 2012). On October 13, 1990, when the Syrian warplanes of the 'Sukhoi' model, under the cover of President Elias Hrawi, who was elected president according to the Taif Agreement, and the new army commander General Emile Lahoud, carried out airstrikes on Aoun's positions and the presidential palace, also damaging the Antonine Institute building in Baabda, and Al-Jumhour School (Annahar, 2014). Syrian soldiers captured the Presidential Palace in Baabda, dozens of troops and civilians were killed during the operation. General Aoun escaped to the French embassy

and was eventually permitted to fly to France, where he stayed in exile until May 2005. With Aoun in exile, Elias Hrawi assumed full authority over the entire country and appointed Omar Karami as prime minister. The Syrian army assisted the militias in disbanding and handing over their weapons to Lebanese authorities. Many militiamen were recruited into the army, security services, and government. Armed Palestinians were disarmed and returned to the camps. Hezbollah alone was permitted to retain its weaponry, due to its involvement in the military resistance to Israeli occupation. Simultaneously, the legitimate army, reformed under General Emile Lahoud, completed its deployment throughout the country, up to the Israeli border area (Traboulsi, 2012).

Given the war's severity, it is not a surprise that the 1982–1990 period saw rapidly deteriorating economic and social circumstances, as well as increased emigration (Makdisi & Sadaka, 2005). The Liberation War and the War of Elimination resulted in significant casualties, including 1,500 killed and 3,500 injured, 25,000 homes damaged, the Lebanese currency falling from LBP 550 to LBP 1,100 to $1, and the emigration of over 100,000 Lebanese, predominantly Christians, to Canada, the U.S., and Australia (Traboulsi, 2012).

1.20 End of the Israeli Occupation

In April 1996, the Israeli army initiated a massive assault on Lebanese soil to eliminate the Lebanese resistance. The assault resulted in massive destruction across South Lebanon, committing massacres that killed and injured hundreds of Lebanese civilians (Harb, 2007). Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese soil only happened after 25 years of occupation when Prime Minister Ehud Barak declared the end of the occupation as part of his election campaign in 1999. Upon his election, he confirmed the withdrawal would take place in July of that year. However, troop withdrawal occurred on May 24, 2000, at 3:00 a.m. as the last Israeli soldier departed Lebanon from the Fatima border crossing (Tür, 2007). Furthermore, Barak's withdrawal plan appeared to be a means of

gaining international support by presenting Israel's commitment to the UNSCR 425 resolution, issued 22 years earlier (Freilich, 2012).

1.21 Assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri: Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005

On February 14, 2005, an explosion shook central Beirut killing Lebanon's Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri. Rafik Hariri was known as the Sunni Muslim self-made billionaire who aided in Lebanon's postwar reconstruction (Borell, 2008). The bomb killed Hariri and 22 others and injured approximately 220 individuals leading to unprecedented protests across the country (Borell, 2008). Hariri's funeral took place in the 'Bourj' which became the center of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, also known as the Lebanese Spring or the Lebanese Intifada. The protests lasted until March 14, 2005, against different parties that were deemed responsible for Hariri's death, namely the Syrian occupation forces and the security services who might have cooperated with them (Khalaf, 2006). Despite Syria's retreat from Lebanon, the wave of terror that started with Hariri's assassination did not end. A series of car bombings engulfed Beirut and the areas surrounding it, the first being in a Christian suburb on the 19th (Borell, 2008). Between March and December 2005, a total of 14 attacks struck the capital and its surrounding – some of which targeted leading critics of the Syrian regime, like Samir Qasir, George Hawi, May Chidiac, and Gebran Tueni, whereas others targeted civilians (Borell, 2008).

1.22 South Lebanon War with Israel (2006) and Resolution 1701

On July 12, 2006, an Israeli army convoy patrolling the Lebanese border was attacked by a division of the militant group Hezbollah, killing three soldiers and capturing two others. In the battle, an Israeli tank attempted to rescue the captured soldiers, however, the rescue met resistance which ended in the death of five more Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers. These results were

regarded as an ‘act of war’ initiated by Hezbollah that forced the chief of staff, Dan Halutz, to declare war on Lebanon (Kotia & Edu-Afful, 2014). The response was swift and severe; innocent civilians were killed, and the infrastructure was heavily affected. The skirmishes escalated into a 34-day battle between the IDF and Hezbollah whereby Israeli ground troops entered Lebanese soil. The war ended with the adoption of UN Resolution 1701 with nearly 1,200 Lebanese lives were lost, around one million displaced, and nearly 15,000 homes destroyed. Meanwhile, Israel also suffered casualties, with a death toll of 43 Israeli civilians, 116 soldiers, and 300,000 displaced in the northern regions (Nakhleh, 2007; Kotia & Edu-Afful, 2014).

1.22.1 Adoption of 1701 Resolution

During the war in southern Lebanon between Hezbollah and the Israeli Forces, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan communicated with official representatives to reach an agreement between Lebanon, Israel, and Hezbollah and to negotiate a ceasefire and prevent further escalation. On August 11, 2006, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) implemented Resolution 1701, calling for a full cessation of hostilities in the month-long war. The resolution specifically requested that Hezbollah cease all attacks and Israel cease all offensive military operations in Lebanon. The UNSC established a buffer zone between the Blue Line in southern Lebanon and the Litani River, urging both Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and long-term resolution to the conflict (Arab, 2012). The 1701 Resolution in 2006 greatly improved UNIFIL’s abilities and assigned it the following duties, such as: securing peace in southern Lebanon, supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deployed throughout the south along the Blue Line while Israel withdrew its soldiers from Lebanon, providing further support to guarantee humanitarian access to civilian communities and the voluntary and safe return of displaced people, and

assisting the Lebanese government, upon request, to secure its borders and other locations of entry (Arab, 2012).

1.23 Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Wars Against Islamic Extremist Groups in 2007 and 2014

On May 20, 2007, heavy fighting broke out in a Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli called Nahr al-Bared. The clash initially occured between the Lebanese Army and a new militia group called Fatah Al-Islam (Conquest of Islam), the conflict resulted in the deaths of 20 militants and 21 soldiers, turning the camp into a war zone (Knudsen, 2010). Fifteen weeks of intense bombardment and gunfire reduced the camp to rubble with an approximate death toll of 500 individuals including 220 militants, 168 army troops, and a minimum of 47 Palestinian civilians. As a result, the camp's 30,000 residents were forced to flee to the Beddawi refugee camp 10 kilometers to the south. The army's hard-won victory and the most violent conflict since the Civil War added to the sectarian tensions and political turmoil in Lebanon (Knudsen, 2010).

In 2013, the Islamic State established a presence along Lebanon's northeastern border. By the summer of 2014, the state had already grown in power and occupied 'Arsal, a border town home to thousands of Syrian refugees and rebels, and used it as a military base to wage attacks against the Lebanese army positions. Over three years, the Islamic State attacked, abducted, and killed dozens of Lebanese soldiers. On August 17, 2017, Operation Fajr al-Jouroud (the final phase) was launched. The LAF was prepared at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels (Saab, 2023). The battle ended with a Lebanese victory which the Lebanese Army Commander, General Joseph Aoun, described as a 'decisive victory over terrorism' (Al Manar, 2017).

1.24 2019 Protests, Post-Revolution Period, and the 2020 Beirut Port Explosion

On October 17, 2019, a nationwide protest movement began in Lebanon. The movement began with activists in Beirut and swiftly expanded throughout the country. The tension had been building for some time due to a deteriorating economic situation, the government's intentions to increase taxes, and a lack of U.S. dollars in circulation. In addition, major wildfires broke out on October 15, damaging twice as much forest in 48 hours as is usually lost in a year. Lebanon received international help, but the local government lacked the necessary resources to address the situation. The three firefighting aircraft were never used, as no funds had been set aside for their maintenance. All of this, along with long-standing concerns of inequality, corruption, power shortages, and other difficulties, infuriated the public. On October 17, the government decided to impose fees on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls, which are calls made through apps like Whatsapp and Messenger (Rakickaja, 2020). Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned a few weeks after protests began in October. He explained his decision by claiming that it would provide a 'positive shock'. This was interpreted as a populist action designed to show that he sided with the people against the March 8 alliance, which now controls Parliament and the Cabinet. According to Assi (2020), the protesters celebrated Hariri's resignation hoping that it would lead to a fundamental change in the country. However, the situation did not have any significant amelioration because Diab, his successor, resigned after the port explosion and could not make any reforms. Almost a year after stepping down, Mr. Hariri nominated himself for premiership and secured the presidency. Despite their measures, frustrated Lebanese have been unable to remove their ineffective political elite (Assi, 2020). Lebanon's sectarianism has stopped the Uprising from fulfilling its goals. Instead of unifying against a shared adversary, each group saw protests as an opportunity to weaken their opponents (Assi, 2020).

The Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020, was caused by the ignition of 2,750 kg of ammonium nitrate stored in one of the port's storage facilities for roughly six years without basic safety procedures, killing around 200 people and injuring thousands more. The damage was worth approximately $4.6 billion. The catastrophe had been blamed on political corruption and carelessness (Assi, 2020). Furthermore, damages from the blast extended up to 10 kilometers away from the site and was felt up to 160 kilometers away, reaching Cyprus. It demolished the port, many houses, over 120 schools, 6 hospitals, 22 healthcare facilities, and several landmarks and cultural sites, with estimated damage worth $4.6 billion (Cheaito & Al-Hajj, 2020). Despite the great losses, the Lebanese government remained idle, and no individuals or entities were held accountable regardless of the protests demanding justice (The United Nations, 2022). The lack of accountability and effort to reestablish the country led to a loss of over 80% of the value of the Lebanese Pound whereby it fell from 1,500 LBP against the U.S. dollar to 40,000 LBP in 2022 (Chehayeb, 2022). The devaluation of the currency has resulted in a significant increase in the prices of imported products. Even food grown in the nearby area comes with a higher price tag due to the expenses of imported fuel and fertilizers. The increased use of pesticides that farmers depend on has been propelled by the discontinuation of subsidies. Official reports indicate a deteriorating situation, with inflation reaching 269 percent in consumer products between April 2022 and April 2023. From February 2023 onwards, the Lebanese pound has remained steady at 90,000 LBP against the dollar (Ali, 2024).

1.25 Israel's 2024 War on Lebanon and Election of the 14th President

Following the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023, military conflict erupted between Israel and Hezbollah along the southern border of Lebanon (Resimić et al., 2025). In September 2024, the intensification of year-long conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah deepened, leading

Lebanon into yet another humanitarian crisis. Israeli airstrikes hit civilian zones, resulting in the displacement of more than one million individuals, comprising Lebanese residents, Syrian and Palestinian refugees, as well as migrant laborers, within the nation (Diab, 2025). Lebanon's citizens and their healthcare system have once more suffered devastating assaults as the conflict in Gaza spread into Lebanon. Since October 2023, Israeli assaults on Lebanon have led to over 4,000 fatalities, injured more than 17,000 people, and displaced nearly 1 million individuals (Abiad et al., 2025). A significant moment occurred on September 17, 2024, thousands of handheld pagers detonated by Israeli forces, causing injuries to over 3000 individuals and resulting in 37 fatalities, including many children and civilians. Cross-border assaults intensified, and airstrikes targeted densely populated regions, such as refugee camps and shelters for the displaced, leading to mass displacement and a worsening humanitarian conditions (Abiad et al., 2025).

In November 2024, Israel's military and Hezbollah were forced to leave southern Lebanon as part of a 60-day ceasefire agreement, mediated by the United States. The ceasefire was largely maintained, although it was soon broken when Israeli forces advanced farther into southern Lebanon (Resimić et al., 2025). Since 2022, Lebanon has lacked a president because of a political stalemate among its sectarian parties. The recent conflict between Hezbollah and Israel added to the complexity of the situation (Mirzaei & Woertz, 2025). In January 2025, Lebanese parliament elected Army General Joseph Aoun as president after a two-year vacancy in the position. In late January, the ceasefire was prolonged until February 18, 2025 (Resimić et al., 2025).

1.26 Structure of the Lebanese Political System

Consociationalism and confessionalism are two concepts used in political science to describe Lebanon's political system. Consociationalism is a method of governance in which political leaders from various communities' band together to govern despite divisions, even in the face of

deep divides within their own societies. Confessionalism, a kind of consociationalism, is commonly used to define Lebanon's distinctive political system. Confessionalism is a form of governance in which political power is distributed proportionally among a country's communities—whether religious or ethnic—based on their proportional representation of the population (Reiche, 2011). Lebanon's political system can be categorized as a sectarian system. The 1843 division of Mount Lebanon (pre-independence) into Maronite and Druze regions set the groundwork for the current confessional system. The French Mandate absorbed several more territories, resulting in a country with several religious sects organized under a feudal system, each led by prominent feudal leaders. The French instituted a confessional system to preserve a balance of power among diverse groups by awarding government positions, legislative seats, and administrative jobs based on sectarian affiliation (Badaan et al., 2020). Following Lebanon's declaration of independence from France in 1943, the National Pact Agreement further established a sectarian representation structure, establishing the following roles, which are still in effect today: The President is a Christian Maronite, the Prime Minister is a Muslim Sunni, the Speaker of Parliament is a Muslim Shia, and the parliamentary representation is in a 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims. Between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon had a lengthy and violent sectarian civil war. It placed Christians against Muslims and split the country along sectarian lines, eventually establishing a system of religious disputes and oppression. At the same time, the civil war paved the way for a power-sharing agreement under a new constitution after the Taif Agreement, which mandated a 1:1 Christian-Muslim ratio for parliamentary participation (Badaan et al., 2020).

Similarly, the Doha accord, signed on May 23, 2008, ended a year-and-a-half political void and established a government of national unity with 16 ministerial positions from the majority, 11 from the opposition, and 3 appointed by the President. The Doha Accord also stated that

the political parties that formed the government must pledge not to resign or obstruct any actions taken by the government (Nassif & Amara, 2015). Lebanon's parliament currently contains 128 seats, 64 of which are for Christians and the remaining 64 are for Muslims. The parliament is arguably the most powerful institution in Lebanon's political system. On the other hand, if an alliance gains a majority in parliament, it will be able to form a government (Baizidi, 2023). Lebanon is led by the President of the Republic, who serves as both the government's Head of State and a symbol of national unity. The President is elected by the parliament for a six-year term (IDAL, 2024). The political system is built on the separation of executive, legislative, and judicial authorities, as well as a system of checks and balances.

Firstly, the Executive Power is represented by the Council of Ministers (cabinet), which is made up of 30 ministers. After consulting with Parliament, the President appoints the Prime Minister (IDAL, 2024). Secondly, the Legislative Power is a single-chamber Parliament with 128 members. Members are chosen for four-year terms via regional elections. Parliament may be dissolved by the Council of Ministers with a two-thirds majority vote at the request of the President of the Republic, subject to particular criteria (IDAL, 2024). Thirdly, the judicial system consists of one administrative court, the State Council Court (Conseil d' État), as well as ordinary judicial courts. The Supreme Court is the highest level of appeal for civil, commercial, and criminal cases. The Constitutional Council handles constitutional issues and election-related concerns. The judges of the various courts (with the exception of select members of the Constitutional Council) are chosen by the Government following a favorable recommendation by the supreme council of justice (IDAL, 2024).

Since the end of the civil war, parliamentary seats have been evenly allocated between Christians and Muslims, despite demographic realities indicating a clear Muslim majority. In addition to the constitutional parity norm, Lebanon's Parliament has established specific quotas for each of the recognized confessional communities. Since the total number of seats grew to 128 following the Civil War, the unofficial formula allocates Maronite Christians 34 seats; Shia and Sunni Muslims 27 each; Greek Orthodox Christians 14; Druze 8; Greek Catholic 8; Armenian Orthodox 5; Alawite 2; and Armenian Catholics, Protestants, and 'other minorities' one each (Felsch, 2022).

Having inspected the rich and complex history of Lebanon in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 shifts the focus to the history of sports in the country. Lebanon's past has played a vital role in modeling its sports culture. By examining this evolution, it becomes possible to observe how historical developments have influenced the introduction and governance of sports. This transition allows us to recognize how Lebanon's historical trajectory is reflected in its sports culture.

Chapter 2: History of Sports in Lebanon

Introduction

A quote from George Orwell that aptly characterizes sport in Lebanon is 'war minus the shooting' (Reiche, 2011). Maugendre (2022) described the division of the sports scene in Lebanon. Since there are 18 sects acknowledged by the government and a parliament that is divided equally between Muslim and Christian members, the Lebanese sports sector is similarly divided regionally and denominationally. Reiche (2011) insisted on this idea by mentioning the top basketball and football competitions, where numerous professional clubs represent each of the 18 state-recog-

nized religions and sects. Most of these clubs have sectarian links to Lebanon's three biggest religious groups: Maronites, Shi'ites, and Sunnis. Additionally, there are clubs for Druze, Armenians, and Orthodox Christians.

To better understand the Lebanese sports situation, the role of sports in the Lebanese society was further investigated. This chapter offers a deeper understanding of the relationship between sports and Lebanese society. An interview was conducted with the Head of Sports at the Ministry of Youth and Sports to better understand the Lebanese sports structure and the FSUL's position among other NSFs in the country. The objective of this chapter is to investigate the history of sport in Lebanon leading to its current structure of sport in Lebanon, to understand where the Lebanese Federation of University Sport stands in this structure.

2.1 Sports Before the Missionaries in Lebanon

While it is true 'modern sports' emerged in England, the Olympic Games began around 2,800 years ago; the Lebanese coast includes two ancient sporting sites (Tranter, 1998; Huizinga, 1950). In his book on Phoenician sports, Labib Boutros documents proof that the organization of sports events, as a tradition, can be directly linked to worship rites in Phoenicia (Boutros, 1981). He supports his claim with the presence of a stadium dating back to the 15th century BCE, built in Amrit 200 meters away from an ancient Phoenician temple. Additionally, Boutros studies the stadium's dimensions and architectural style, which he suggests are different from the Hellenistic style but similar to a stadium in Olympia thus ruling out Greek construction. Additionally, Boutros suggests that the Beirut Hippodrome can be traced in its heritage to a Greek gymnasium built on the remains of an older Phoenician palaestra in Tyre (Boutros, 1979). More evidence suggests that in 175 BCE, a time when the Levant was under Hellenic influence, a sporting event was hosted in

honor of the Phoenician deity of Tyre, Melkart. It is said that the event consisted of different running, jumping, and throwing competitions (Boutros, 1974).

2.2 The Beginning of the Lebanese Sports Movement

According to Dr. Abdel Sattar Trabulsi, Director of Athletics at AUB (1927-1972), "organized sports in the country only started when AUB took the initiative in 1866. It began with track and field which were followed by football, tennis, and swimming" (Loughran, 1972). In 1908, the first private sporting associations were founded (Sacre, 1980). In 1913, Ramez Ghazawi returned to Lebanon after completing his studies in Switzerland. He brought skis with him hoping to introduce and develop this practice on the country's snowy slopes (Soutou, 2015).

Most Lebanese sports federations were created between 1943 and 1948, and the Lebanese Olympic Committee was established in 1948 (Sacre, 1980). Then in 1953, plans to build Beirut's now famous Sports City were set in an attempt to further Lebanon's involvement in sports by creating a space for organizing regional games in the city. As a result, Lebanon's participation in international sports improved and the number of NSFs affiliated to international ones increased. Moving on, four years later in 1957, the second Pan-Arabian Games were held in the Sports City complex (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). In 1959, the Lebanese government created the Youth and Sports General Directorate to develop sports in the academic scene. The Youth and Sports General Directorate assisted the government in financial support and promotion, both of which were aided by the country's booming economy at the time (Sacre, 1990). Unfortunately, Lebanon's progress in the sports field came to a halt between 1966 and 1970. The sudden stop was initiated by INTRA Bank's bankruptcy combined with the eruption of war between Israel and Arab countries and the 1969 Lebanese revolution. In 1972, the Lebanese government initiated the Youth and Sports General Directorate and the Ministry of Education decided to undertake the task of reforming the sports

sector. Both sectors worked on modernizing sports standards in the country while taking into consideration the country's social, economic, and demographic development. Despite these efforts, corruption, passivity, and personal interests plagued the sports sector in Lebanon between 1972 and 1975 (Sacre, 1990).

2.3 Sports During the 1975–1990 Lebanese Civil War

During the Lebanese Civil War, sports came to a halt, echoing the country's broader socioeconomic and infrastructural breakdown. The conflict, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, left stadiums and sporting facilities abandoned, making organized athletic activities largely impossible. This section focuses on the example of football and basketball, the two most representative sports in Lebanon. Their importance in Lebanese culture makes them crucial for studying how these sports endured and evolved throughout this turbulent time. The Lebanese Civil War would subsequently divide the country in two, making it impossible to organize a unified national football championship. As a result, the sport became managed by two federations, each organizing their own competition (Soutou, 2015). Despite the fame football gained, it became embedded in the country's segregated political system leading to a championship limited to Christian teams from the East Zone and Mount Lebanon (Sagesse, Homenmen, Homenetman, Racing, Istiklal, Temsal Zgharta…). The Salam Zgharta club, however, chose to compete against Muslim teams from West Beirut (Nejmeh, Al Ansar, AL Akhaa Al Ahli Alay, Al Safa, Chabibet el Mazraa…) (Soutou, 2015).

The Lebanese civil war eliminated all official championships and activities, so the Lebanese Basketball Championship was suspended for 17 years (from 1975 until 1992), and activities were limited to tournaments organized by clubs in the western and eastern parts of the capital. Most of the basketball clubs, except Al Riyadi and Al Taadod (both were on the west side of

Beirut), were located in the East zone of Beirut. During the war phase between 1975 and 1976, there were no basketball activities at Al Riyadi club due to the presence of militias. Later, Syrian troops took over Al Riyadi's court as their primary headquarters (Douaihy, 2024). However, in the East side of Beirut, the basketball scene was completely different from the that of the west side. The East side boasted a large number of prominent basketball clubs with noteworthy players. The competitions continued even during the war, with the Keserwan District being home to the best clubs and players, Al Kahraba club stood out as the dominant force in all competitions. In the mid-1980s, several new teams emerged, including Al Tadamon Zouk, Club Central-Jounieh, Mont La Salle, Wardiah club, Club Enfants de Neptune de Beyrouth (ENB), Club Animation Sportive-Zouk, Homentmen, and Adonis Sports Club (Douaihy, 2024).

In 1976, and considering the Lebanese civil war, all sports reform laws and statutes were suspended (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). A year later, the temporary peace paved the way for sport reformation. The Ministry of Education wrote laws, decrees, and statutes that were then blocked due to interference from some federations and members of the Lebanese Olympic Committee for fear of losing their position to the Ministry (Sacre, 1990). In 1982, the Sports City was destroyed and by 1988, the country lacked playing fields, equipment, and personnel which led to a general decline in sports nationwide (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). However, the unification of football under one federation after the Taif Agreement in 1989 would usher in a new era for the sport in Lebanon. Due to the newfound influence of politics on sports, football teams became symbols of different political parties. Thus, Lebanon's political and confessional divisions were reflected in its football clubs. By realizing the importance of football as an image promoter, the political leaders of the country tried to purchase football clubs in order to secure a larger stake in the elections within the Lebanese Football Federation (Soutou, 2015).

2.4 School Sports

2.4.1 Implementation of Physical Education and Sports (PES) in Lebanese Schools

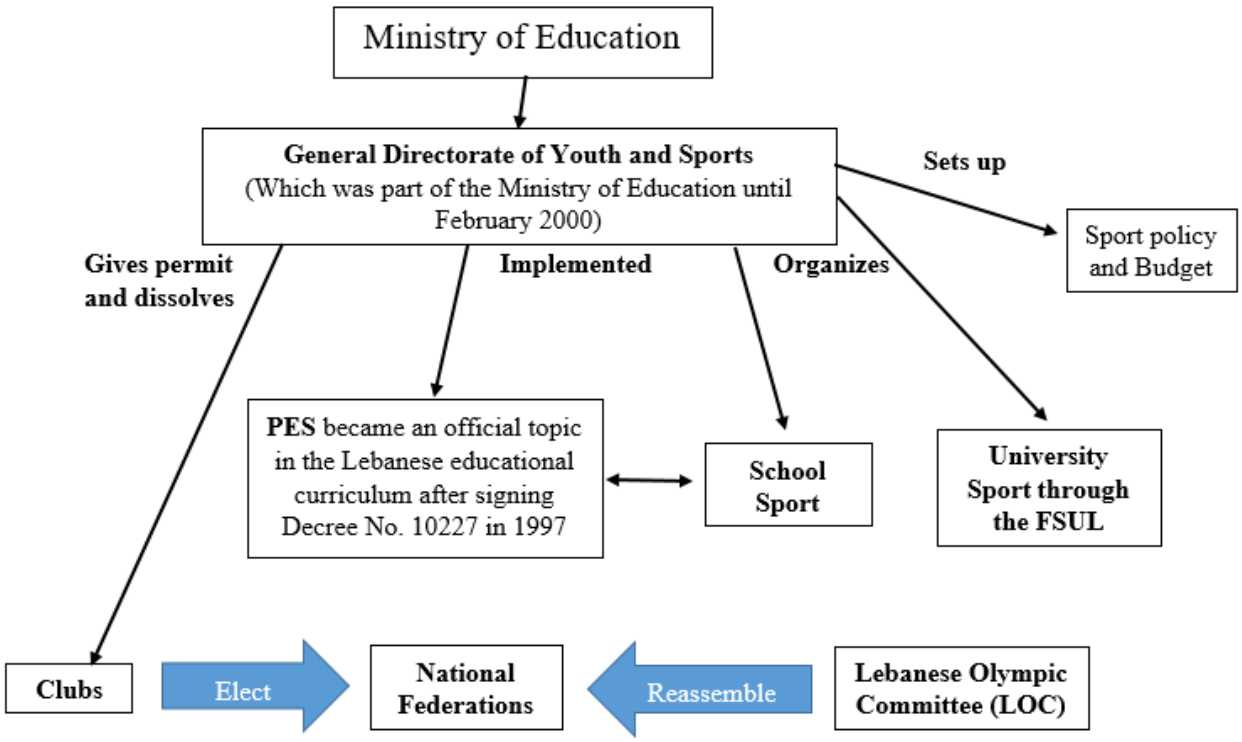
The first official school textbooks were issued in 1924 (Resolution No. 2852, December 1, 1924, Official Paper No. 1827, December 19, 1924). These were written under the French protectorate due to the High Commissioner's determination to reorganize and reestablish basic education in the official schools of Greater Lebanon. The reforms led to the incorporation of Physical Education into educational institutions through exercises and activities. In the mandated nations, this kind of teaching initially followed specific hygiene standards. Although universities and sports federations began to flourish in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not until 1993 that the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (LMEHE) awarded the first accreditation for universities to launch Physical Education and Sports (PES) programs. In the 1993–1994 academic year, the University of Balamand (UOB), a private college in North Lebanon, was the first to launch the PES curriculum (UOB, 2019).

The Lebanese government subsequently implemented Decree No. 10227 in 1997, establishing Physical Education and Sports (PES) as an official topic in the Lebanese curriculum (Nassif, 2013). This regulation requires public and private schools to provide students with two hours of PES instruction each week. In theory, regional supervisors and school directors assigned by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (LMEHE) are meant to oversee the implementation of this provision. However, due to a lack of sports facilities in most schools, principals are not obligated to include PES in their curriculum.

In 2022, the Youth and Sports Committee conducted a session to review the proposed legislation to establish PES as a fundamental subject in the official exams for the intermediate and

general secondary certificates. The Committee sanctioned the draft legislation, which was projected to take effect beginning with the 2023–2024 academic year (Lebanese Parliament, 2022). However, many details related to the logistics remained unsolved, and, as of 2025, the project had not yet started (in discussion with Dr. Tarek Assaf, head of the physical education and sports committee in the Center for Educational Research and Development of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, September 2025).

Figure 4: *Physical Education and Sports in the Lebanese Educational Curriculum*



Note. This figure illustrates the status of Physical Education and Sports as an official subject following the enactment of Decree No. 10227 in 1997.

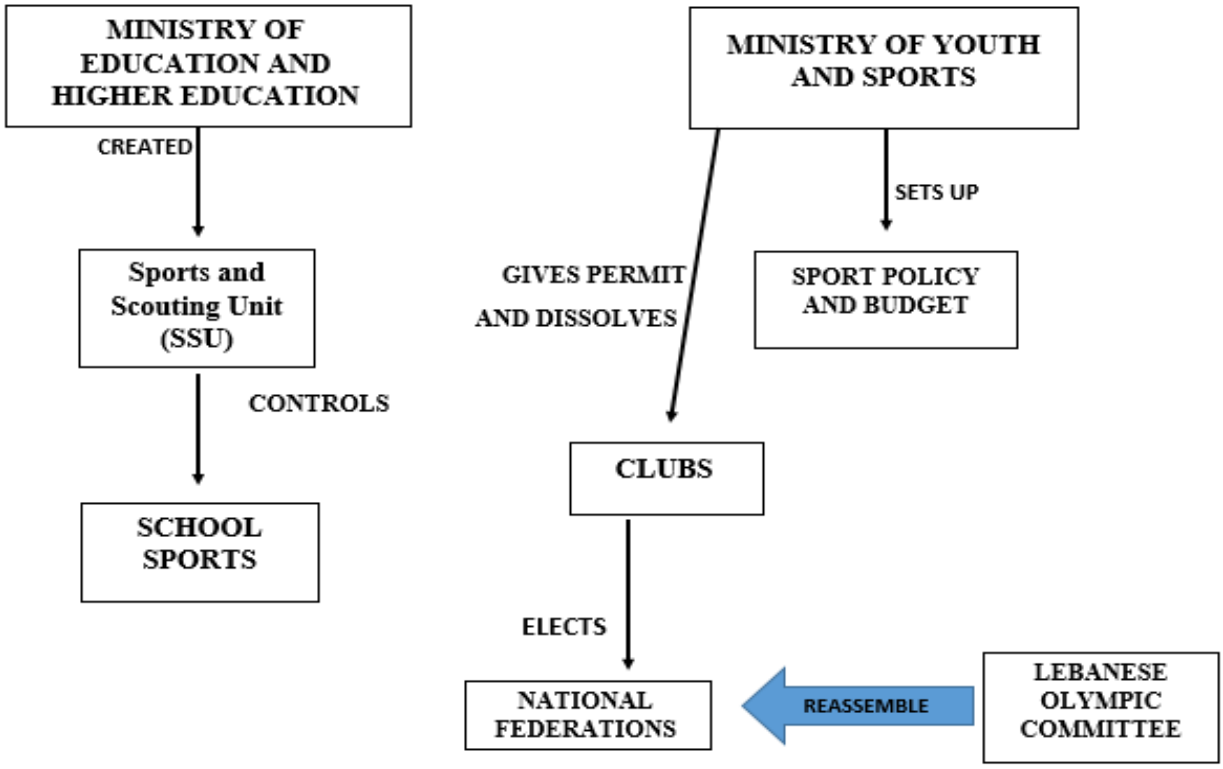
The physical education curricula in Lebanon are drawn from patterns and strategies implemented in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Denmark, and Sweden. However, these

curricula cannot be fully implemented in Lebanon due to a lack of trainers, staff, and sports facilities (Saad & Delsahut, 2021). Despite nearly a century of organizational existence, the physical education system continues to struggle in forming a clear identity and securing a stable position in the Lebanese academic system. Indeed, French influence remains omnipresent in Lebanese public education, as reflected in official texts. The French culture legacy, imposed during the Mandate period, has persisted into the post-mandate era, especially during unstable periods when replicating foreign ideas was preferred over developing original ones. The Lebanese Ministry of Education is responsible for developing the physical education curriculum. However, it lacks the capacity to establish a comprehensive physical education program within the Lebanese educational system. Moreover, in 1990, the ministry did not have a sufficient number of physical education specialists to establish any form of sports program. As a result, most schools offer physical education as an optional subject in their curriculum, while others do not offer it at all (Nassif & Jacob, 2012).

Lebanon's history is shaped by cultural and communal particularities, religious influences, international interference, and conflicts—all of which are key factors impacting the future of physical education in Lebanon. Consequently, Lebanon's educational system has consistently mirrored the conflicts rooted in its political and religious structures (Saad & Delsahut, 2021).

2.4.2 The State of Sports in Lebanese Schools

Figure 5: *The School Sports Sector Under Law No. 247*

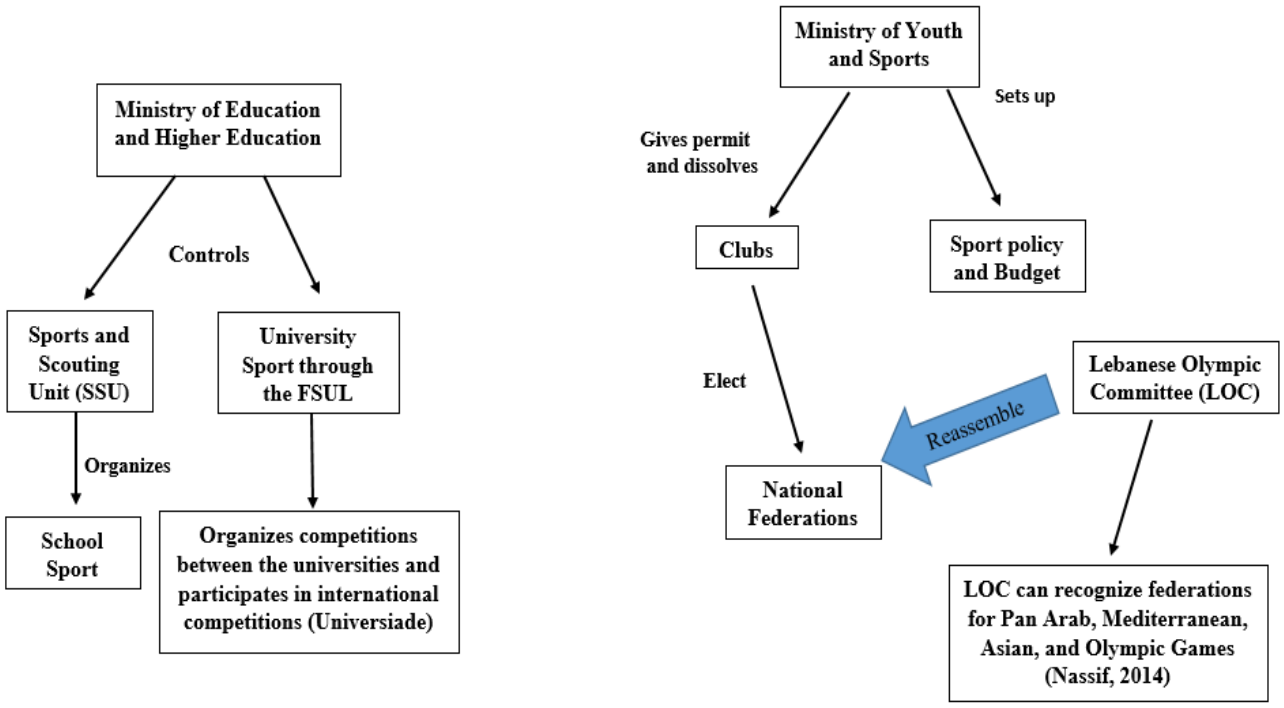


Note. This figure illustrates the regulations for the school sports sector established by Law No. 247, which was signed in 2000.

School sports were placed under the authority of the Sports and Scouting Unit (SSU) of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education according to Law No. 247, signed in 2000. Moreover, the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri aimed to strengthen the sports, youth and scouting movements, leading to the establishment of the first Ministry of Youth and Sports through Law No. 247, dated July 8, 2000. This law stipulated the merger, cancellation, and establishment of ministries and councils. Dr. Sebouh Hovnanian was appointed as the first minister to head the new ministry (MYS, 2024).

School sports were assigned to the Ministry of Education under Decree No. 213. However, the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS) argues otherwise, claiming that school sports could serve as a talent pool for the country's national sports teams (Nassif & Amara, 2015). Following the issuance of Decree No. 213, the LMYS and the Youth and Sports Committee in Parliament attempted to place school sports under the authority of the LMYS. The primary modification was that the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL) became part of the Ministry of Education, rather than remaining under the authority of the LMYS.

Figure 6: *Integration of the FSUL into the Ministry of Education*

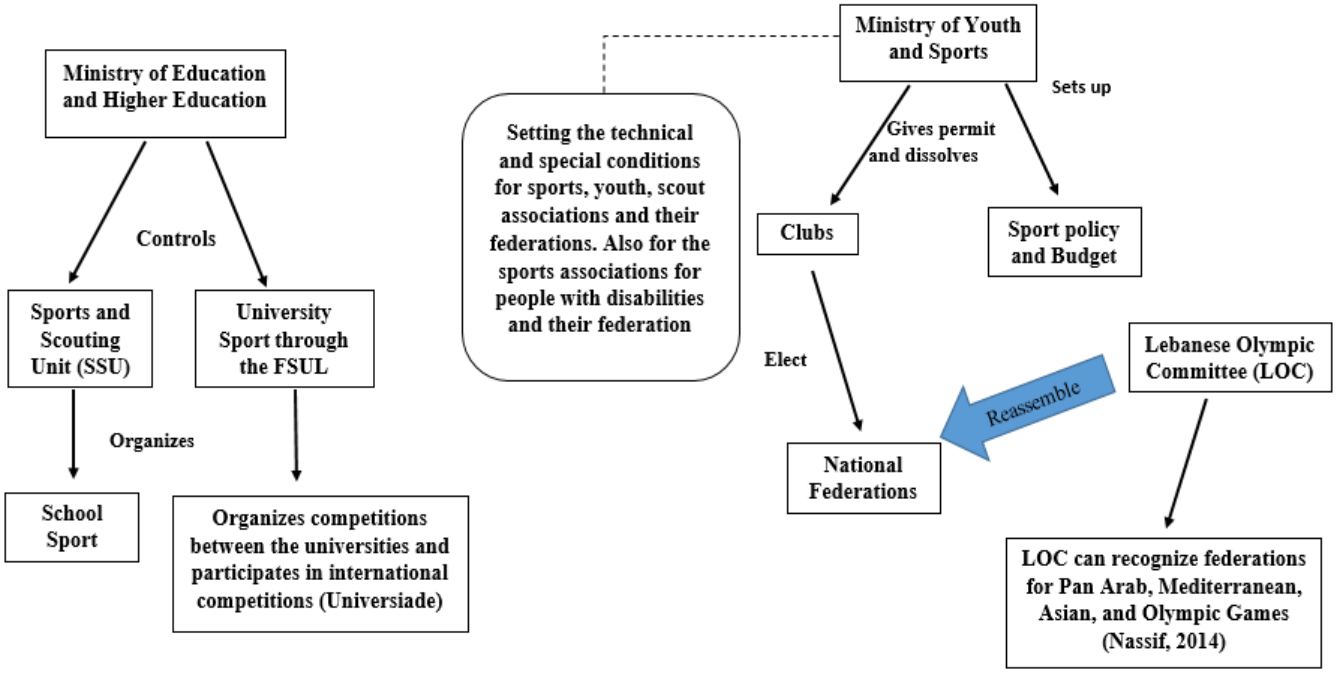


Note. According to Decree No. 213, signed in 2007, the FSUL became an official part of the Ministry of Education.

Following Decree No. 213, Resolution No. 90/1/2007 was published on July 26, 2007, to determine the technical and special requirements for scouting, youth, and sports associations, their

federations, and sports associations for individuals with disabilities and their respective federations.

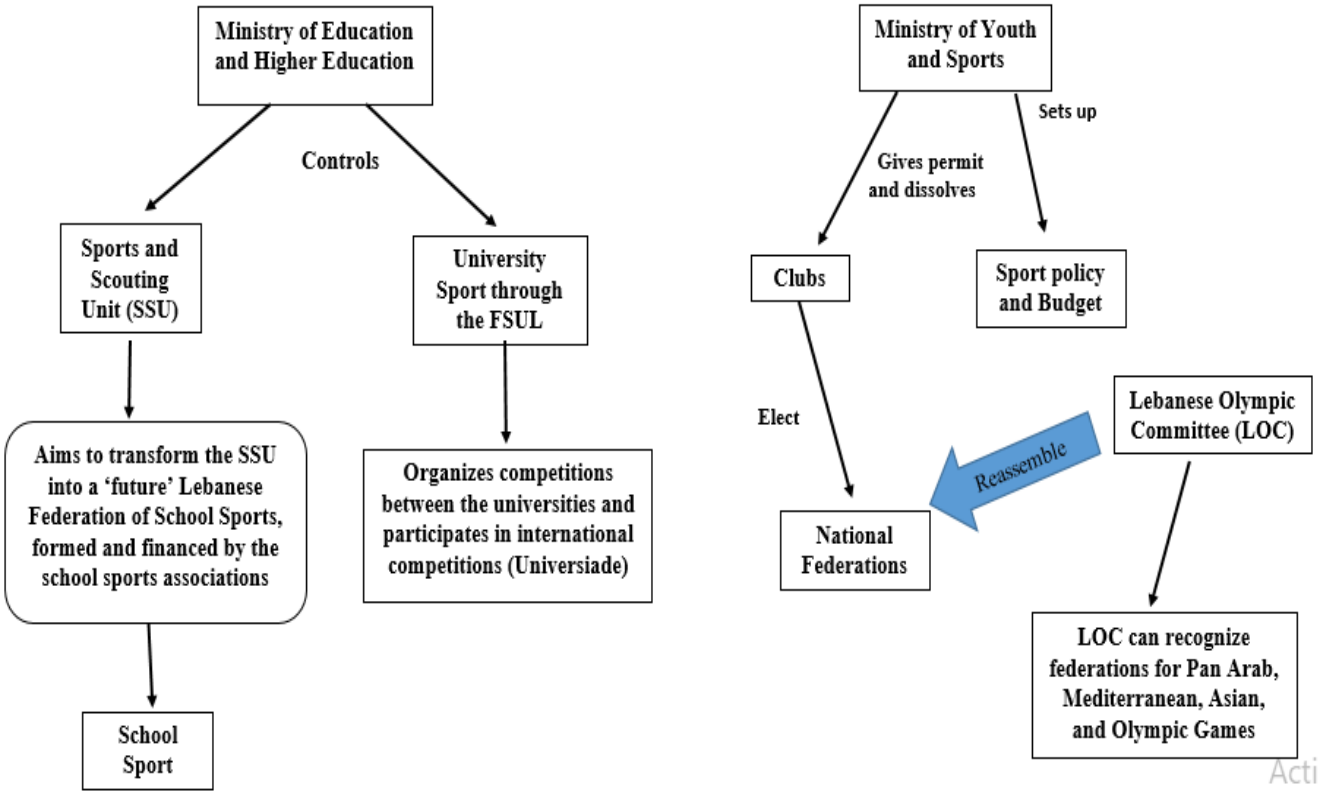
Figure 7: *Technical and Special Sports Associations for People With Disabilities*



Note. This figure is based on Resolution No. 90/1/2007, issued on July 26, 2007, regarding the determination of technical and special sports associations for people with disabilities and their federation.

As a result of Decree No. 213, the Ministry of Education issued Decree No. 147/3/2011 on January 26, 2011, aiming to transform the Sports and Scouting unit (SSU) into a proposed Lebanese Federation of School Sports, to be formed and financed by the school sports associations. Schools aiming to participate would pay an annual enrollment fee, which would in turn enable the federation to organize improved inter-school league competitions (Nassif & Amara, 2015).

Figure 8: *The Structure and Function of the Sports and Scouting Unit*



Note. Adapted from Decree No. 147/3/2011, signed by the Ministry of Education in 2011, concerning the Sports and Scouting Unit (SSU).

To elaborate on the state of school sports, Dr. Mazen Kobeisseh, Head of the Sports and Scouting Activities Unit at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, stated that they had reached approximately 85,000 student participants in school sports and National Education Scouts and Guides activities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Economic crises of 2019. He also reported a tremendous decrease in participation following the crises, followed by a gradual increase (exceeding 40,000 student participants), involving 981 public and private schools. This left the Ministry responsible for organizing approximately 4,000 matches, requiring adequate stadiums, referees, and a supportive environment in 2024 (National News Agency, 2024).

Given the above-mentioned results and according to the International School Sport Festival (ISF), the Sport and Scout Activities Unit at the Ministry is tasked with improving school sport in the country. Lebanon's strategy is to further increase student participation by arranging age-based events in sports such as football, futsal, basketball, volleyball, handball, table tennis, badminton, cross-country athletics, and rhythmic/artistic gymnastics.

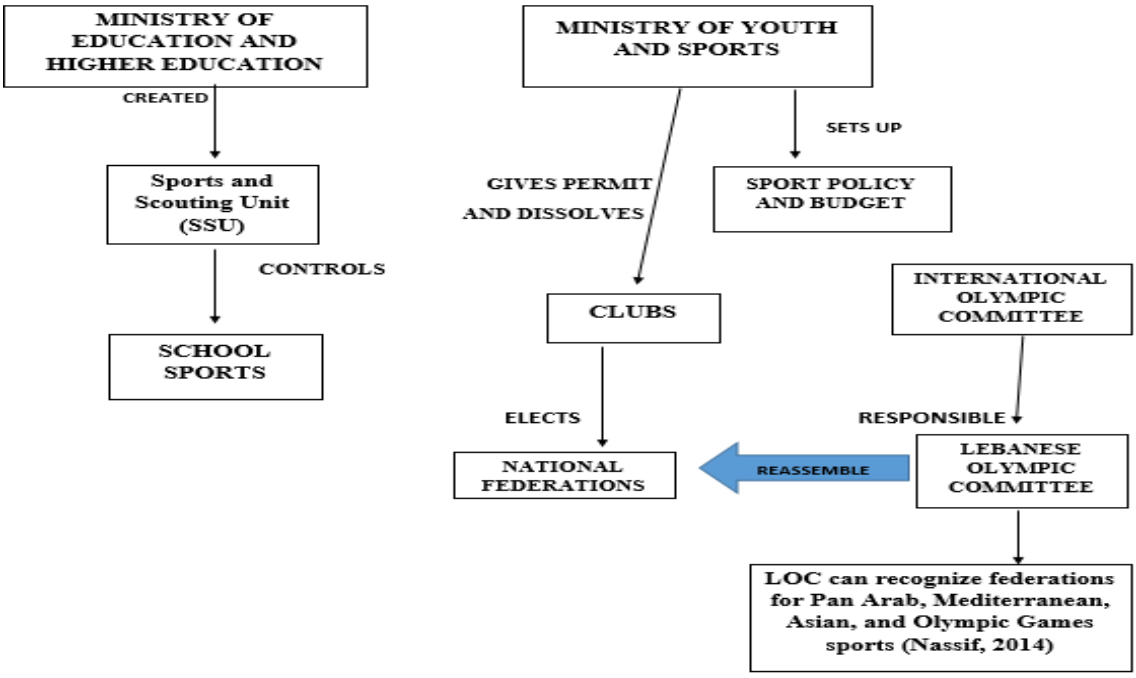
2.5 Lebanon's Sports Structure

2.5.1 Main Actors of the Lebanese Sports Structure and National Sports System

Lebanon's sports structure and its national sports system are influenced by several factors. First, the government is represented by the LMEHE and the LMYS—previously known as the General Directorate of Youth and Sports. The government licenses clubs, federations, and the Olympic Committee and has the power to dissolve these entities. It is also responsible for creating sports policies and budgets, and for supervising sports at the national level. Finally, through the Ministry of Education, it is responsible for organizing and managing school sports league competitions (Nassif & Amara, 2015). The Lebanese Olympic Committee represents all national federations and authorizes Lebanon's participation in regional as well as Olympic Games. National federations are elected by the clubs of each sport and are tasked with improving their respective sports at various levels: elite level, mass participation, including grassroots competition, and recreational sport. They are also responsible for preparing the teams chosen to represent the country in international competitions (Nassif & Amara, 2015). It is also important to note that the clubs electing the national federations must be recognized by the government. However, a structured system for participation, corporate (both private and public owned), regional, and elite sport still does not exist in Lebanon (Nassif & Jacob, 2012).

The sport system explained above did not happen overnight; it took the Lebanese government more than ten years to establish and define its functioning (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). For instance, in December 2001, the Lebanese government and the LMYS signed Decree No. 6997, an official document explaining the rules and regulations of sports bodies, associations, federations, and the Lebanese Olympic Committee, which were inspired by the French model (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). The decree also addressed the relationship between the organizations and the MYS (Nassif & Jacob, 2012). After Decree No. 6997, the LMYS lost control of the LOC, which is overseen by the International Olympic Committee. The ministry has power to recognize and dissolve national federations, while the LOC can recognize federations for Pan Arab, Mediterranean, Asian, and Olympic Games sports (Nassif, 2014).

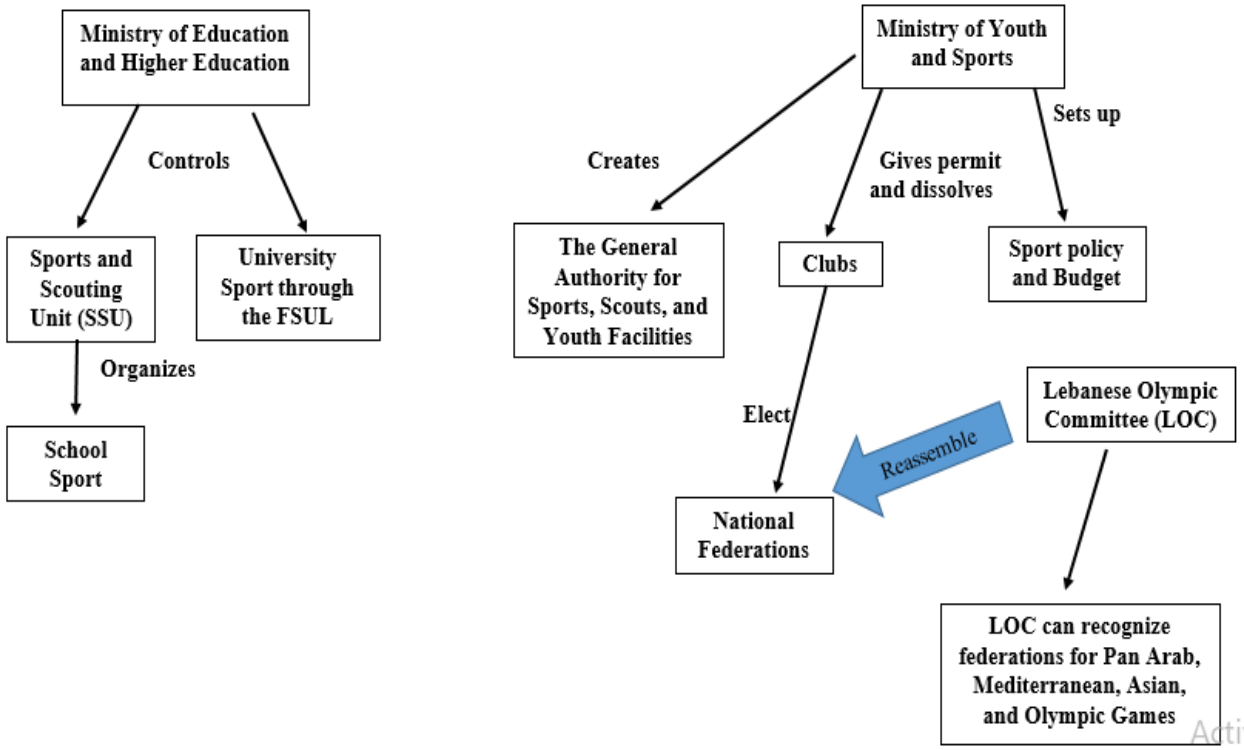
Figure 9: *Regulations for Sports Associations, Federations, and the Lebanese Olympic Committee*



Note. This figure outlines the rules and regulations established by Decree No. 6997, signed in 2001 by the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS), concerning sports bodies and the Lebanese Olympic Committee (LOC).

In November 2004, Law No. 629 was signed by the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS). According to Article 1, school and university activities within schools and universities remain the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The Law also explains the functioning of the Lebanese sports system but does not provide clear objectives or an outline of the sport policies set by the Lebanese MYS and the Lebanese Olympic Committee (Nassif & Jacob, 2012).

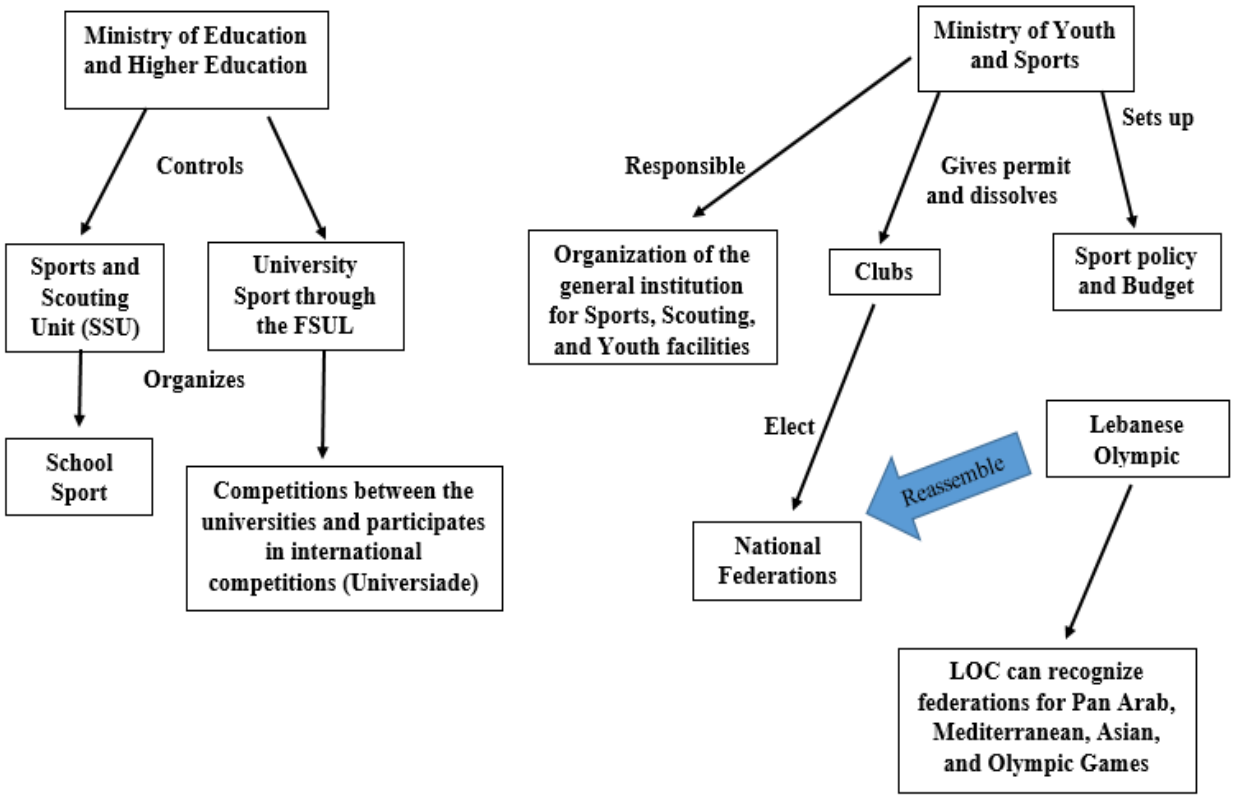
Figure 10: *The Functioning of the Lebanese Sports Mechanism*



Note. This figure details the functioning of the Lebanese sports mechanism as established by Law No. 629, issued in 2004.

In March 2006, Decree No. 16680 was issued for the organization of the General Institution of Sports, Scouting, and Youth Facilities. To briefly summarize this Decree, Article 1 states that the General Authority for Sports, Scout, and Youth Facilities is responsible for managing and developing in public Sports, Scout, and Youth Facilities established prior to the issuance of this decree, as well as those that will be established later with funding from it or from the state. These Sports, Scouting, and Youth Facilities include, but not limited to, cities, complexes, facilities, fields, and sites established for the purpose of practicing sports, scouting, and youth activities that are overseen by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Figure 11: *The General Institution for Sports, Scouting, and Youth Facilities*

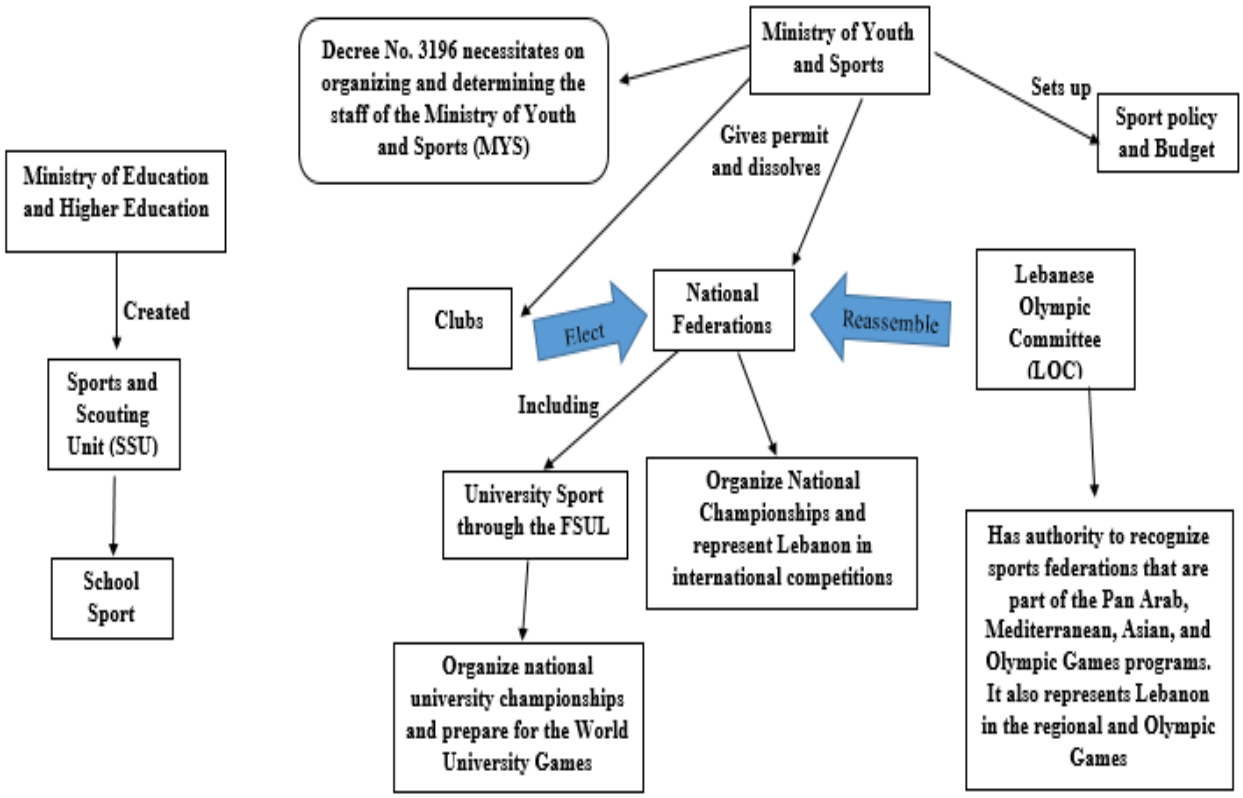


Note. This figure represents the structure of the general institution for sports, scouting, and youth facilities as established by Decree No. 16680.

Decree No. 8990, which was signed on October 11, 2012, redesigned the internal operations of the various Lebanese associations and federations, including internal elections, General Assemblies, and the organization of international delegations. However, it did not make any significant changes to the structure established by Decree No. 213 (Nassif, 2018).

Despite Decree No. 213, signed in 2007, that formally placed the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL) under the authority of the LMEHE, in practice the federation has consistently operated under the supervision of the LMYS. Consequently, in 2016, new decrees (Decree No. 3196 and No. 4481) were introduced to formally place the federation once again under the LMYS (personal communication with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat, 2025). Decree No. 3196, issued on April 7, 2016, focuses on organizing and defining the staff structure of the LMYS. The Ministry proposed amendments concerning its structure and tasks, the composition of staff, and appointment conditions for key positions such as the Head of the Planning and Information Soervice, the Head of the Planning Department, and positions including medical specialist, sports specialist, youth specialist, sports technician, and youth technician (Center for Public Sector Projects and Studies - Development, 2024).

Figure 12: *Organization and Staffing of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports*



Note. This figure illustrates the organizational structure and staffing of the LMYS as determined by Decree No. 3196, issued on April 7, 2016.

To briefly examine Decree No. 3196, Article 1 states that the LMYS is responsible for youth and sports affairs, their associations, clubs, and federations, and all activities related to them, including educational, ethical, civic, social, and promotional areas. It is responsible for supervising and monitoring the bodies, committees, associations, and youth, scouting, and sports federations, as well as overseeing their activities, including granting licenses for their establishment, ensuring compliance with legal requirements, and revoking licenses upon proof of their violation of those laws and regulations. Decree No. 16680, dated March 30, 2006, is hereby repealed, along with any

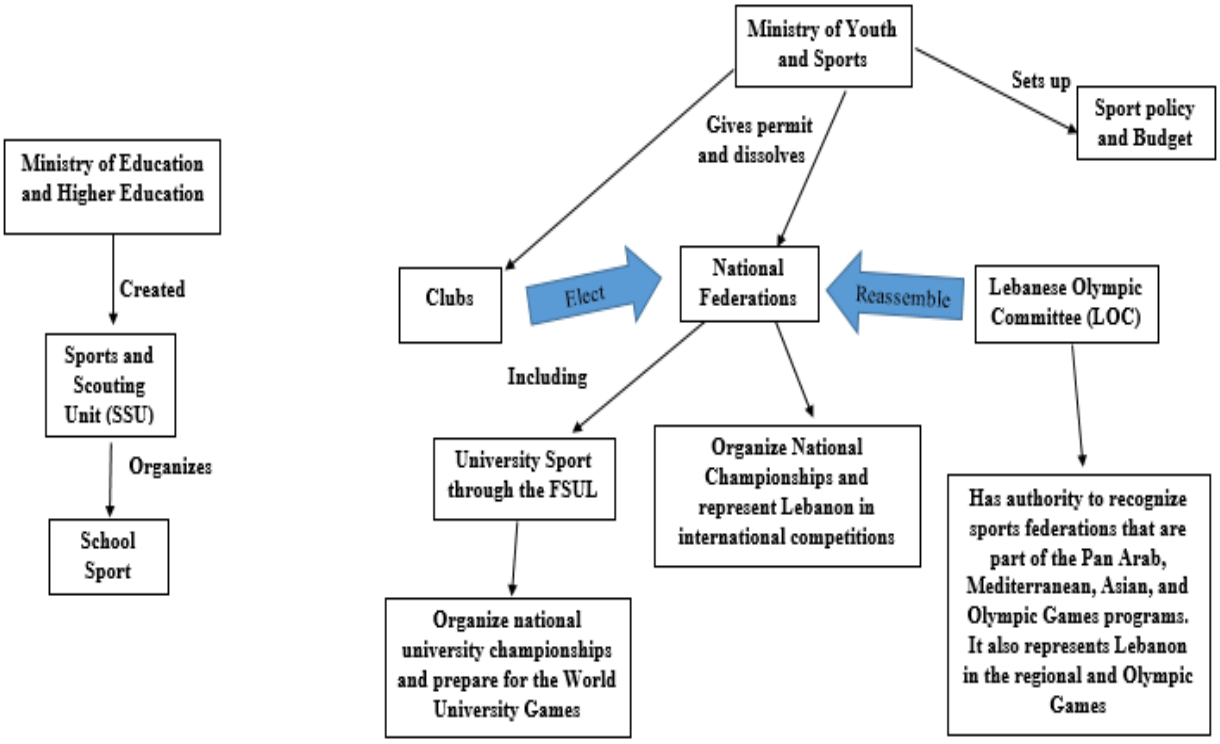
provisions that contradict or do not align with Decree No. 3196. Article 2 of Decree No. 3196 states that the LMYS consists of the General Directorate of Youth and Sports and its administrative departments and units. The General Organization for Sports, Youth and Scouting Facilities are linked to the LMYS and subject to its supervision (MYS, 2024).

The main changes in this decree are Articles 25 and 26, which discuss the staffing of the Ministry of Youth and Sports - General Directorate of Youth and Sports in both the central administration and regional departments in the governorates. It also specifies the appointment conditions for some administrative and technical positions in the Ministry of Youth and Sports - General Directorate of Youth and Sports. On August 23, 2016, the Youth and Sports Committee reviewed Decree No. 3196 (dated July 4, 2016), which concerns the staffing and organizational structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Following the session, Committee Chairman MP Simon Abi Ramia said: "The committee's agenda included reviewing Decree No. 3196, which was approved by the Council of Ministers and which regulates the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports. After extensive discussion with His Excellency the Minister and the Director General, the Ministry indicated that 176 employees are required on staff to fulfill its functions and address current vacancies. Currently, only 48 out of the 116 approved positions are filled and therefore the Ministry of Youth and Sports is experiencing significant staffing shortages and is unable to carry out its duties. His Excellency the Minister was requested to consult the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers regarding the preparation of a competition through the Civil Service Council to fill vacancies within the LMYS (Lebanese Parliament, 2024).

Moving on to Decree No. 4481, dated in October 27, 2016, consists of 15 titles and 126 articles. It is worth noting that the Lebanese sports system currently operates under all the Titles and laws of Decree No. 4481. Its primary purpose is to regulate the sports, youth, and scouting

movements (LMYS, 2024). All the NSFs must organize their structure, system, rules, and regulations in accordance with Decree No. 4481 (personal communication with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat, 2024). For example, in the context of NSF elections, the Minister of Youth and Sports in the caretaker government, Dr. George Kallas, issued Circular No. 5/1/2024 dated August 13, 2024, addressed to all sports associations and federations. It stated: "In accordance with the provisions of Article 25 of Decree No. 4481, dated October 27, 2016 (regulating sports, youth, and scouting activities), which stipulates that 'the term of the administrative body is set at four years, and elections shall be held after the conclusion of the summer Olympic cycle, whether or not it has taken place' (National News Agency, 2024). Article 125 stipulates that the provisions of Decree No. 8990, dated September 29, 2012, are hereby annulled, along with all provisions that contradict the provisions of Decree No. 4481 or that are not in accordance with its content.

Figure 13: *Legal Framework for the sports, youth, and scouting movement*



Note. This figure demonstrates the legal framework for regulating the sports, youth, and scouting movement as established by Decree No. 4481, signed in 2016.

Rahal et al. (2019) argue that the Lebanese sports system was originally inspired by the French model; it is characterized by a pyramidal structure in which Lebanese federations are directly dependent on international federations and must respect their laws and rules. The Lebanese federations for each sport represent the country at the Asian and international levels, and they organize the national championships by adopting a system of promotion and relegation (Rahal, 2017).

2.5.2 FSUL Position in the Lebanese Sports Structure

The Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL) is an official entity recognized by the Lebanese government and currently operates under the authority of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Its main function is to arrange the National University Championships and prepare for the World University Games (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). An interview was conducted with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat (head of the Sports Department at the Ministry of Youth and Sports) to better understand the position of the FSUL in the current sports system. A comparison was made between the FSUL and other NSFs to assess the FSUL's status. The FSUL organizes various sports based on availability within the registered universities. Whereas the other NSFs are responsible for organizing a single sport, for example the Lebanese Basketball Federation (FLB) focuses only on governing the game of basketball.

To further examine the differences between the FSUL and other NSFs, the NSFs other than the FSUL include sports associations (clubs) registered within the federation which constitute the federation's General Assembly. The General Assembly elects the federation's Executive Board. Similarly, clubs have their own General Assemblies, which elect their Executive Boards. In the

case of the FSUL, it consists of both the Executive Board and the General Assembly. The General Assembly, which is formed by the registered universities in the FSUL, elects the Executive Board of the federation. For the universities, there is no General Assembly; instead, the university president appoints a university athletics representative to oversee sports activities and to represent the university in the federation (Article 44). This representative, in turn, participates in the elections for the FSUL Executive Board (personal communication with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat, 2024).

Moreover, the FSUL has the particularity that it collaborates with the NSFs. As per Article 54, the FSUL must form a committee to manage each approved sport in coordination with the relevant national federation for that sport. Additionally, the FSUL sets the annual program for all competitions and activities, while committing to not conflict with the calendar of the national federations. In the event of any conflict, the absolute priority will be given to athletes' participation in the competitions of the national federations and no others. The national federations work to ensure the logistical support to secure the success of the competitions and activities organized by the Lebanese Federation of University Sport, for example, the referees, courts, and other logistical components.

The situation differs in the case of the federations' elections, the Olympic-recognized federations must be members of both the relevant International Federation and the Lebanese Olympic Committee (Article 21). Furthermore, according to Article 22, the Lebanese Olympic Committee shall nominate a member federation to this committee if the game is an Olympic Games or is recognized as an Olympic game. The committee's term ends either at the conclusion of the Summer Olympic Games or upon fulfillment of the conditions required to elect a federation for the sport, in accordance with the applicable regulations. The term of office of the administrative body of sports federations is set at four years, with elections to be held after the end of the Summer

Olympics, whether or not they are held (Article 25). In the case of the FSUL's elections, it is not considered an Olympic-recognized federation; therefore, its elections are not scheduled after each Summer Olympic Games. The FSUL elections will occur every four years following the end of the previous term. In the case of the current FSUL, the next elections will occur in 2025 (personal communication with Mr. Mohamad Oueidat, 2024).

2.5.3 Political Interventions in the FSUL

Nassif and Amara (2015) investigated sports, policy, and politics in Lebanon. According to the authors, religious communities are overrepresented in the national sports sector, which is detrimental to building a clear and effective framework. In other words, there is political and religious representation in terms of ownership, management, and team composition in each sports organization or academy. Furthermore, various individuals in the sports sector are appointed to numerous positions in sports federations due to their affiliation with certain political parties (Nassif & Amara, 2015). According to the study, 90% of those working in sports organizations are unqualified for their positions and were hired for political reasons (Nassif & Amara, 2015).

As the focus shifts to university sports, it is important to examine how political dynamics directly affect this particular field. On March 27, 2007, Decree No. 213 replaced Decree No. 6997 of 2001. The primary modification was that the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL) was transferred from the Ministry of Youth and Sports to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (LMEHE). This move triggered one of many confessional issues. The Shiite Amal party controls the LMYS, which is a component of the 8 March movement (dominated by the Shiite Hezbollah and Amal parties, as well as the Maronite Christian Free Patriotic Movement), whereas the LMEHE is controlled by the Sunni Future party, which is part of the 14 March movement. These movements are political adversaries, each aiming to dominate as many political areas as

possible. Their dominance in sports helps them gain influence on the Lebanese political landscape. The FSUL was led by Nasri Lahoud, an 8 March politician and sibling of then-Lebanese President Emile Lahoud. Nasri Lahoud's goal in dissolving the FSUL was to replace the federation entirely and replace it with one led by a member of the Future party. Thus, the 2007 directive aimed to achieve confessional overrepresentation (Nassif, 2014). According to Mr. Sami Garabedian, former president of the FSUL (2021–2023), the 2021 elections were marred by political and confessional struggles aimed at gaining control of the federation. He further elaborated that during the 2021 elections, a group of individuals sought to ensure that one religious faction would gain increased power within the federation. Their list of candidates featured 13 members, with all five major positions (President, Vice President 1, Vice President 2, Treasurer, and General Secretary) belonging to the same sect. Despite their efforts, they were unable to secure victory in the elections (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

With the Lebanese sports structure thoroughly analyzed in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will build upon this foundation by investigating the history of university sports in Lebanon and providing a deeper understanding of the FSUL.

Chapter 3: History of University Sports in Lebanon

Introduction

The Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL), initiated in 1947 and officially established by a presidential decree in 1949, is the sole federation responsible for supervising and promoting university sports in Lebanon. The FSUL has been a member of the International University Sports Federation (FISU) since 1949, reflecting its ongoing international engagement. According to the FISU website, the FSUL has a long history of involvement in international univer-

sity sports. The legacy started with Judge Nasri Lahoud, who held the position of First FISU auditor from 1955 to 1959, followed by Mr. Walid Daouk, who served as FISU Auditor from 1991 to 1995. More recently, Mr. Sami Garabedian served on the FISU Education Committee from 2011 to 2019 and has been its Vice-Chair since 2020, while also serving as a member of the FISU Executive Committee since 2023. This chapter explores the history of university sports in Lebanon, focusing on the foundation of the FSUL and its participation in international competitions, beginning with the Student World Championships/International University Games organized by the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE) in Paris in 1947 and continuing through the World University Games held by FISU in China in 2021. Additionally, this chapter examines the creation of the University Sports Conference (USC) by elite private Lebanese universities.

Interviews were conducted with Mr. Sami Garabedian, former FSUL president (2021–2023) and current advisor (2024–present), and Mr. Maroun El Khoury, current Secretary of National Teams Affairs (2024–present), to gather information about the histories of the FSUL and the USC. An interview was also conducted with Mr. Ziad Saadeh, the current FSUL president (2024–present).

3.1 Establishment of the FSUL

Jean Petitjean, a French chemical engineer and university athletics leader, established the first World University Games in Paris in 1923. From 1924 until 1939, the International Confederation of Students, known as the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE) and founded in 1919, was responsible for organizing many editions of the Summer and Winter University Games. These student championships took place across Europe until being halted by the Second World War (FISU, 2023). Jean Petitjean envisioned reviving the World University Games after the armi-

stice. The International Union of Students (IUS) took the initiative in the student movement, attempting to realize this vision. This communist-oriented organization arranged the World University Winter and Summer Games in Davos and Paris in 1947 (FISU, 2023).

In conjunction with the first World University Winter and Summer Games in 1947, the FSUL, better known as the Lebanese Federation of University Sport, was founded. The FSUL is the only legal authority that oversees Lebanese university sports and organizes competitions in various team and individual disciplines for all genders. The federation has participated in all university sports events since 1947. At the university level, Lebanon won a silver medal in men's volleyball at the 1947 University Games in Paris (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). The event was held under the Student World Championships/International University Games organized by the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE). At that time, the rising Western group was led by Luxembourg mathematician and teacher, Paul Schleimer. After extensive negotiations began in 1948, the International University Sports Federation—or Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire (FISU)— was established. The organization had its foundational General Assembly on June 1, 1949 (FISU, 2023).

Later in 1949, the FSUL was recognized as a public utility by Presidential Decree No. 14064 and elected Mr. Michel El Mur as its first FSUL president (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). Public utility, by definition, is a company or organization that provides essential goods or services to the general public and can be privately owned or operated by the government (LS Data, 2024).

The federation's main purpose is to coordinate with relevant national federations, build university teams, represent Lebanon internationally, and join similar regional and international federations. Additionally, the FSUL is a member of the International University Sports Federation

(FISU), the Asian University Sports Federation (AUSF), and the Arab University Sport Federation (AUSF) (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). On the other hand, the International University Sports Federation (FISU) organized the International University Sports Weeks, while the International Union of Students (IUS) continued organizing the World University Games. There are now two distinct multi-sport student events held simultaneously. The FISU's first summer event took place in the Italian town of Merano in September 1949. In addition, editions were held in Bad Gastein (1951), St. Moritz (1953), Jahorina (1955), Oberammergau (1957), and Zell-Am-See (1959) (FISU, 2023). Lebanon's achievements in the Universities Games continued in 1951, when they won a gold medal (men's volleyball) in the Summer International University Sports week in Luxembourg. After numerous Lebanese participations in the Universities Games, a change in the FSUL presidency occurred in 1958. Judge Nasri Lahoud became FSUL president, a position he held for 56 years, from 1958 until 2014 (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

A major turning point occurred in the history of university sports competitions, when FISU and the IUS decided to cancel their separate summer competitions in 1959. In reality, they agreed to unite under the 'Universiade', organized in Turin by Centro Universitario Sportivo Italiano (CUSI), the Italian university sports body. The Winter Universiades began in Chamonix in 1960 with 220 athletes from 16 countries and reached a record of nearly 3,000 participants from 58 countries in Krasnoyarsk in 2019 (FISU, 2023). The FSUL, one of the founding members of FISU, has participated in almost every FISU Winter and Summer Games since these started in the 1950s. The FSUL allows Lebanese universities to engage in international competitions, the 'Universiade' and the 'FISU World University Championships', organized by the International University Sports Federation (FISU). The FSUL calls for multiple open try-outs to all universities for athletes who

believe they are qualified to be selected for the national team of a certain sport. The Executive Board with the recommendation of the Secretary of National Teams Affairs will appoint coaches and their assistants. The coaches will have the full authority to pick the right players to be selected for the national teams. At most times, the FSUL cannot fund the national teams' participation expenses abroad. These expenses are either covered by the selected players or shared with mutual agreement between them and their universities (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). Each Universiade edition contains different sports in which Lebanese athletes have consistently participated in these Summer and Winter editions. Lebanese student-athletes have managed, over the years, to participate in a total of 21 editions of the Summer World University Games (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

The active environment of university sports tournaments came to an unforeseen halt during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), as the nation struggled with widespread strife and instability. The uniting power of sports was marginalized as campuses that were once alive with athletic activities turned into conflict zones for political and sectarian reasons. Nevertheless, in 1978, as the nation was still amid ongoing instability, Lebanese universities made an ambitious choice to bring back athletics competitions (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). From 1978 until 1990, sports activities were frequently called off in light of the armed conflicts within the country. Events and activities were frequently postponed due to safety concerns. Additionally, the FSUL participation in the Universiade from 1990 to 2007 included various sports over the years. Starting with the Summer World University Games editions, in 1991, the FSUL featured the men's basketball national team in the 16th edition in Sheffield. The 17th in Buffalo (1993), the federation sent men's basketball and volleyball national teams, while the 18th in Fukuoka (1995) the FSUL national teams included tennis men/women and women's swimming team. In the 19th

in Sicily (1997), the FSUL showcased volleyball men/women, basketball women/men, swimming women/men, and athletics national teams. Delegations of athletics (high jump) and volleyball were formed and sent to compete in the 20th in Palma de Mallorca (1999). While the 21st in Beijing (2001) had only a men's basketball team representing the FSUL, and the 23rd in Izmir (2005) the FSUL representatives included men's volleyball and women's basketball. The 24th in Bangkok (2007) featured a wide range of FSUL delegations, including table tennis women/men, judo, taekwondo, swimming, tennis, and athletics (Hayek, 2020).

For the Winter World University Games editions, the FSUL sent delegations to participate in various sports during the 1990–2007 phase. The 17th Winter Universiade in Jaca, Spain in 1995, the FSUL participated in skiing. For the 18th Winter Universiade in KOREA-MUJU CHONJU in 1997, the FSUL was represented in ski slalom. And for the 20th Winter Universiade in POLAND-ZAKOPANE in 2001, a delegation was sent to participate in giant slalom (snowboarding) and giant slalom (alpine skiing) (Hayek, 2020).

Observing how the FSUL organized sports competitions locally reveals the limited scope of its activities during the phase from 1990 till 2007. FSUL organized events in different sports such as: basketball, volleyball, football, handball, tennis, table tennis, and swimming. During some of those years, FSUL used to organize an end-of-year event, 'Universiade' with the participation of almost all universities. Friendly matches and invitational tournaments were also common practice in this phase (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). According to the current FSUL president, Mr. Ziad Saadeh (2024–present), he stated that the competitions organized by the FSUL at that time lasted only one month, with no league structure spanning the academic year, leaving the calendar largely empty. This was contrary to the universities' aspirations,

which led to conversations among universities to create a league that would last for the entire academic year (personal communication with Mr. Ziad Saadeh, 2024).

Despite participating in multiple international competitions and organizing few events, the outcomes fell short of expectations for growth and success in university sports. The disjointed strategy and the competition format offering a limited number of competitions probably hindered its potential influence, hindering the development of a dynamic and flourishing sports sector. Consequently, the goals of advancement and success were mostly unrealized, emphasizing the necessity for a more organized and collaborative approach in future initiatives. For this reason, by the beginning of the 2007/2008 academic year, a major development occurred in the Lebanese universities' sports. The inactivity of the FSUL due to internal conflicts among its members and their inability to organize sports competitions regularly between universities, resulted in the creation of the USC by five private universities. These universities mutually agreed upon all tournament rules and regulations. The USC was not created to replace the FSUL or take its place in the universities competitions; all USC members agreed, during several meetings, that once FSUL returns to proper functioning under a new brand and elected FSUL board and activities resume as they should, there would be no need to continue with USC. USC was only a temporary alternative to intensify intercollegiate competition, in parallel with FSUL, and was never intended to replace it (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

During that year, the five universities competed exclusively in men's basketball against each other (personal communication with Mr. Maroun El Khoury, 2024).

Table 9: *List of the Five Private Lebanese Universities That Created the USC*

1. Lebanese American University- Beirut (LAU-BEIRUT)
2. Lebanese American University- Byblos (LAU-BYBLOS)
3. University of Balamand (UOB)
4. Haigazian University (HU)
5. Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ)

In the 2008/2009 academic year, three additional universities joined the USC Board: Antonine University (UA), American University of Beirut (AUB), and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), making it eight universities in total. The USC Board elected a president yearly through a rotational elections concept (each year, one member of the USC served as president). During this academic year, the seven universities competed in Futsal (men) and Basketball (men) (personal communication with Mr. Maroun El Khoury, 2024).

In parallel, despite the expansion of the USC Board and the development of its activities, Lebanese student-athletes took part in different sports for both genders through their participation in international sports competitions organized by FISU between 2008 and 2022, such as swimming, tennis, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, football, futsal, biking, handball, rugby (men), triathlon, beach volleyball, fencing, weight-lifting, and badminton (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). Notably, according to Decree No. 88/1/2014 which formalizes the establishment of an Executive Board, Mr. Nasri Lahoud Jr followed in his father's footsteps in becoming the president of the FSUL (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). However, after the formation of the new FSUL committee, the USC continued to flourish and to

organize its sports competitions. In the 2014/2015 academic year, three additional universities joined the USC competitions as guests, alongside the seven members bringing the total to 11 universities actively involved in sports: Beirut Arab University (BAU), Notre Dame University–Louaize (NDU), and American University of Science and Technology (AUST) (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

In an effort to investigate the percentages of the USC members' relative to the total number of universities/institutions registered with the LMEHE, calculations were performed and presented in the table below.

Table 10: *Distribution of USC Members Relative to Total LMEHE-Registered Institutions*

Academic Year / **Variables**	**2007/2008 (Start of USC)**	**2008/2009**	**2014/2015**	**2018/2019**	**2022/2023 (End of USC)**
Number of universities/institutions registered in the LMEHE (According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2019)	37	38	46	50	51
USC members (LAU Beirut and LAU Byblos operate under a single registration with the LMEHE and are counted as one member institution)	4	7	10	10	10

Percentages of USC participants compared with the total number of universities registered in the LMEHE	4×100/37= **10.81%**	7×100/38= **18.42%**	10×100/46= **21.73%**	10×100/50= **20%**	10×100/51= **19.6%**

As shown in the table above, the percentages across five different periods were calculated: the first period, 2007/2008 academic year, representing the establishment of the USC. The second period is the 2008/2009 academic year, indicating the addition of three members. The third period is the 2014/2015 academic year, signifying yet another three additional members to the USC Board. The fourth period is the 2018/2019 academic year, representing the last USC season before the 2019 Lebanese revolution, and the outbreak of COVID-19, which caused a halt in sports activities in Lebanon. The fifth and final period is the 2022/2023 academic year, marking the end of the USC activities. In the first period, the percentage recorded was 10.81%, indicating 4 USC members and 37 total universities registered in the LMEHE. This increased in the second period to 18.42% with 7 USC members and 38 total universities. For the third, fourth, and fifth periods, the number of USC members remained stable at 10 universities, while the number of universities registered in the LMEHE increased from 38 to 51. The percentages varied from 21.73% to 20% to 19.6%, respectively. These percentages indicate that the number of USC members compared with the total number of universities registered in the LMEHE is relatively low. It also indicates that the USC was created by a limited number of universities, suggesting that this competition was monopolized by them.

A comparison was conducted among all 51 universities registered in the LMEHE in 2024 in across three characteristics in order to examine whether there are any differences between the

USC members and other non-USC universities (QS Rankings, UniRank rankings, and tuitions fees (cost per credit)). The first characteristic is the one related to the universities' QS Rankings. According to QS Rankings' website, the higher education analytics company Quacquarelli Symonds has created a portfolio of comparative college and university rankings called the QS World University Rankings. This year's ranking includes more than 1,500 universities from 105 higher education systems, making it the largest one yet. According to the QS Rankings in Lebanon in 2024, only eight Lebanese universities (LAU, AUB, USJ, UOB, USEK, NDU, BAU, and LU) possess a QS Rankings: a notable finding is that seven of them are members of the USC (LAU, AUB, USJ, UOB, USEK, NDU, and BAU).

The second characteristic is related to the popularity of universities across Lebanon. According to the UniRank website (4icu.org/lb/), UniRank™ is a leading International higher education platform and search tool that evaluates and ranks more than 13,900 officially accredited universities and colleges in 200 countries. UniRank's goal is to create a non-academic league table of the top universities and colleges based on genuine, impartial, and independent online metrics given by independent web intelligence sources rather than data contributed by universities themselves. After going through the UniRank website, it was found that eight USC members (AUB, LAU, USJ, UOB, USEK, NDU, BAU, and HU) are among the top 10 most popular universities in Lebanon in the UniRank table in 2024.

Table 11: *UniRank Top 10 Most Popular Universities in Lebanon*

Rankings of the Most Popular Universities in Lebanon (4icu.org/lb/)	**University Name**
1	American University of Beirut (AUB)

2	Lebanese American University (LAU)
3	Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ)
4	University of Balamand (UOB)
5	Lebanese University (LU)
6	Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)
7	Notre Dame University–Louaize (NDU)
8	Beirut Arab University (BAU)
9	Haigazian University (HU)
10	Lebanese International University (LIU)

The third and final characteristic is related to the tuition fees (cost per credit) of different Lebanese universities. Regarding the tuition fees, only 26 out of 51 universities shared this information on their websites. The universities were divided into four categories: 1st category (800 dollars and above per credit): includes two USC members (AUB and LAU) 2nd category (300 to 500 dollars per credit): includes six USC members: USJ, UOB, USEK, NDU, AUST, and HU. 3rd category (100 to 250 dollars per credit): includes two USC members: UA and BAU, along with 12 Non-USC universities. 4th category (50 to 100 dollars per credit): Includes four non-USC universities. The data indicates that there are eight universities (USC members) in the 1st and 2nd categories, which means that 80% of USC members (8 out of 10) have higher tuition fees than other universities. After examining these three characteristics, it can be concluded

that the majority of USC members are considered the best-ranked, most popular, and most expensive universities in the country. It is also evident that not all Lebanese universities or institutions are interested in sports or participate in sports leagues. For instance, there are four institutions solely focused on religious studies.

To better understand why these 10 USC members were selected to compete in the USC, a personal communication was conducted with Mr. Sami Garabedian, one of the initiators of the USC's idea. He stated, "We wanted to begin with universities that we believed best exemplified the vision, aspirations, and transparency of the USC of clean, healthy, and fair competitions". Additionally, the availability of facilities in these universities was a major criterion. Considering that the USC universities due to their reputations, academic rankings, and infrastructure, are regarded as the 'elite' universities of Lebanon, the initiative was taken to examine whether the organization of exclusive sports competitions is a common pattern among high-ranked universities by looking at the case of the Ivy League Universities in the United States of America.

The first documented instance of a consistent Harvard team participating in collegiate athletic competitions is a mention of a rowing competition against Yale in 1852. In 1863, the first official intercollegiate baseball game took place, and in 1873 the football association was formed, leading to a game against Yale in 1875. The sports organization was established in that year, with the initial organized competition between Harvard and Yale occurring in 1879 (Sargent, 1910). The Heptagonal Games were established in 1934 by a group of seven schools, which is why they are called the Heptagonal Games: Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Princeton, and Yale. The Army and Navy, U.S. service academies, participated temporarily, University of Vir-

ginia for one year, and Brown became permanent members in 1949. Even though the schools participating now are similar to those in the modern Ivy League, the competitions are still called the Heptagonal Games (Tracksmith, 2024).

The Ivy League colleges and universities have been engaging in athletic competitions with one another for the past sixty years, setting them apart from other institutions. They were all regarded as partners in college sports due to the established leagues in ice hockey, baseball, basketball, and swimming. Furthermore, the formation of the Heptagonal Games Association encompassed various sports leagues such as track and field, baseball, and swimming. The Ivy League schools' athletic directors became familiar with collaborating, which led to the creation of the term Ivy League (Ivy League college, 2012). Starting with the concept of the Ivy League, it was established in 1954 as a sports conference between multiple private American universities (Ivy League, 2024). It includes Harvard (founded 1636), Yale (1701), Pennsylvania (1740), Princeton (1746), Columbia (1754), Brown (1764), Dartmouth (1769), and Cornell (1865)— these universities are among the most prestigious colleges in the world. The term 'Ivy League' suggests high academic standards and selectivity in admissions, according to Wong (2016). The Ivy League is consistently recognized as the leading academic conference and boasts more national championships than any other collegiate athletic conference. In the last three years, it has featured over 240 nationally-ranked programs and is known for sponsoring 34 sports, the largest number of sports among NCAA conferences, with over 8,000 student-athletes competing each year (Ivy League, 2024). However, the group of universities is now known for its prestigious education in the United States, shifting away from just focusing on sports since its formation. While the group is not directly linked to the U.S. government, universities are considered essential to promoting the positive reputation of the entire U.S. higher education system internationally and have received significant

research funding from the government (Nye, 2004). Covell (2004) offers a summary of how the Ivy League was established and its distinct features, specifically focusing on the Council of Ivy Group Presidents, the official name of the league. Covell contends that many now see the league as a solution to the perceived disconnect between athletics and academics in higher education, acting as a Division I antidote. Both on their own and as a group, these schools have greatly influenced the beginning, expansion, and progress of American college sports.

In order to better understand about the characteristics of the Ivy League universities for accurate comparison with USC universities, the Ivy League universities are consistently placed in the top 20 national universities on rankings by sources such as Forbes and U.S. News & World Report. Due to their prestigious academic statuses, Ivy League schools possess significant endowments from donations and assets. Universities utilize these funds for constructing buildings, recruiting esteemed staff, and aiding students with financial assistance. Harvard had the largest endowment in U.S. higher education with $42 billion at the end of the 2020 fiscal year according to the NCES. Yale, Princeton, Penn, and Columbia are also highly ranked in terms of endowment size, each having endowments totaling over $10 billion in 2020 (Genevieve Carlton, *What is the Ivy League?: BestColleges*, 2023).

In conclusion, after inspecting the characteristics of both the USC universities and the Ivy League universities, the USC universities may be considered as the ‘Ivy League’ of Lebanon. In examining the domestic university rankings of USC and Ivy League universities, it is apparent that both have consistently been the top-ranked institutions in their respective countries. Also, there are many similarities in terms of popularity and prestige in their countries. The USC competitions were established by elite universities in Lebanon, while the Ivy League and Heptagonal Games

were created by prestigious universities in the U.S. This illustrates that ‘elite universities’ tend to come together for joint initiatives, particularly in sports.

On the other hand, in an effort to advance the overall growth of university sport in Lebanon, the Lebanese Federation of University Sport officially opened its new headquarters on the outskirts of Beirut in the presence of FISU Vice President Marian Dymalski in 2016. This development is remarkable, as the FSUL is one of the few federations in Lebanon to possess its own headquarters. Moreover, the establishment of this facility was made possible through funding presented by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS) (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). Moreover, during that time in 2016, Decree No. 4481 was issued, the federation fell under the jurisdiction of the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS). Regarding the Lebanese Federation of University Sport in the Decree, the Executive Board of FSUL is mandated to serve for a four-year term (Article No. 50 of Part IV). Furthermore, according to Article No. 51 of part IV the FSUL is composed of: Executive Board, General Assembly, and committees. For more elaboration, according to Article No. 53, the Executive Board of the FSUL consists of 13 members; the General Assembly elects the members of the Executive Board, and the elected members distribute positions among themselves. The General Assembly may also elect the members of the Executive Board, each in their position, according to the federation’s regulations. The Executive Board consists of: President, Vice President 1, Vice President 2, Adviser 1, Adviser 2, General Secretary, Treasurer, Secretary of National Team Affairs, Secretary of International Relations, Secretary of Competitions, Secretary of Disciplinary Committee, Secretary of Media Affairs, and Secretary of Medical Committee. The General Assembly consists of the licensed universities that are members of the FSUL. Each university or licensed higher education institution that is authorized to engage in sports activities is represented in the General Assembly of the Federation by a

delegate appointed through an official mandate signed by the relevant authority at the university (Article No. 52). For the committees formed by the FSUL, its main purpose is to manage each of the approved games in coordination with the relevant national federation for the game (Article No. 54).

Until the 2018/2019 academic year, USC competitions experienced a significant expansion by featuring in its competitions numerous sports including: basketball men, basketball women, football men, futsal men, futsal women, volleyball women, volleyball men, handball men, handball women, track and field men/women, table tennis men/women, swimming men/women, tennis men/women, badminton, and squash (personal communication with Mr. Maroun El Khoury, 2024). However, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis in 2020/2021, all sports activities in universities were stopped. In 2021, new bylaws were drafted and approved by the Ministry of Youth & Sports, which were the stepping stone for a new-look federation that meets the aspirations of student-athletes. The General Assembly of the FSUL in November 2021, elected its new 13-members Executive Board who serve a 4-year term. The universities and higher education institutes registered with the FSUL constitute the General Assembly, which meets regularly to deliberate on the federation's affairs. In 2021, Mr. Sami Garabedian was the first ever elected FSUL president in its history (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

Following the initial verbal agreement between the USC members to return university sports solely under the umbrella of the FSUL, the majority of the USC members became part of the FSUL in 2021 (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). According to Mr. Maroun El Khoury, the USJ Sports Director (a USC member), he believes that the FSUL is the only responsible entity for university sports in Lebanon. Therefore, when the election of the new

FSUL Executive Board took place in 2021, USC members agreed to cease their competitions and decided to provide the FSUL an opportunity to take over all university sports competitions, believing it would meet the aspirations of university sports. Moreover, Mr. Ziad Saadeh added that the newly elected FSUL Executive Board wanted to adopt competitions that would be held across all academic years, as the USC done in recent years, which further reassured USC members and encouraged their integration into the FSUL.

The elections of new FSUL Executive Boards in 2021 and 2024 demonstrate the integration of USC member universities into the FSUL's Executive Board.

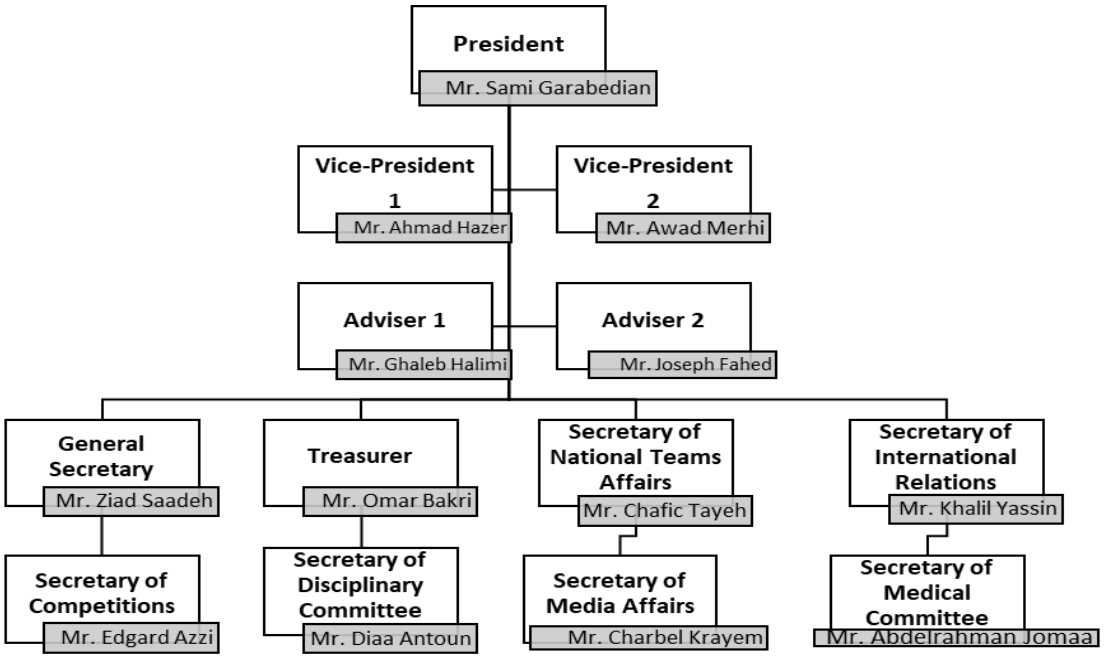
Table 12: *Percentages of the USC Members' Representatives in the FSUL Executive Boards*

FSUL Executive Board / **Variables**	**FSUL Executive Board 2021**	**FSUL Executive Board 2024**
Number of USC members' representative in the Executive Board	6 represents (6×100/10)= 60% from the total members of the USC)	8 represents (8×100/10)= 80% from the total members of the USC)
Number of FSUL Executive Board members	13	13
Percentages of the USC members of the FSUL Executive Board (%)	(6×100)/13= 46.15%	(8×100)/13= 61.53%

Starting with the 2021 FSUL Executive Board, which consists of 13 members, six of them (LAU, UOB, AUST, BAU, USJ, and UA) were USC members, representing 46.15% of the FSUL Executive Board. It is also worth noting that these six members' universities in the 2021 FSUL

Executive Board represent 60% of the total USC members. The following are the members of the FSUL Executive Board in 2021 (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

Figure 14: *FSUL Executive Board in 2021*



Note. Data retrieved via personal communication with S. Garabedian on (2024).

-President: Sami A. Garabedian (LAU)

-Vice-President 1: Mr. Ahmad Hazer (LU)

-Vice-President 2: Mr. Awad Merhi (LIU)

-Adviser 1: Mr. Ghaleb Halimi (UOB)

-Adviser 2: Joseph Fahed (Lebanese Canadian University (LCU))

-General Secretary: Mr. Ziad Saadeh (AUST)

-Treasurer: Mr. Omar Bakri Kasbah (BAU)

-Secretary of National Teams Affairs: Mr. Chafic Tayeh (USJ)

-Secretary of International Relations: Mr. Khalil Yassin (Phoenicia University (PU))

-Secretary of Competitions: Mr. Edgard Azzi (UA)

-Secretary of Disciplinary Committee: Mr. Diaa Antoun (City University (CITYU))

-Secretary of Media Affairs: Mr. Charbel Krayem (Independent)

-Secretary of Medical Committee: Abdelrahman Jomaa (RHU)

- Role of some FSUL members (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024):

-Secretary of National Teams Affairs: Selecting the universities' National teams which represent Lebanon in International tournaments such as the International University Sports Federation (FISU), the Asian University Sports Federation (AUSF), and the Arab University Sport Federation (AUSF).

-Secretary of International relations: Responsible for handling correspondence and communicating with all the international federations/associations (FISU, AUSF, and AUSF).

-Secretary of competitions: Communicating with all the universities to organize and schedule all the sports competitions between them. As well as, ensuring all logistical matters such as assigning referees and inspecting all the universities' sports facilities.

Despite not receiving sufficient funding from the LMYS, the FSUL held meetings in 2021 to set plans to attract sponsors. All universities registered with the FSUL are required to pay two

types of fees: Annual membership (paid in LBP: Lebanese pounds) and Registration and participation fees (in United States Dollars) (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). In the 2021/2022 academic year, as the academic calendar progressed into the spring semester, from February to April 2022, the FSUL initiated its own activities (personal communication with Mr. Maroun El Khoury, 2024). In the 2022/2023 academic year, USC ceased its sports activities following the full resumption of FSUL competitions at the start of the academic year (personal communication with Mr. Maroun El Khoury, 2024). It is worth noting that in this academic year, there were 25 members registered in the FSUL (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). Currently, 26 universities—representing approximately 50.98% (26×100/51= 50.98%) from all the registered universities in the LMEHE in 2024 from across Lebanon—are official members of the FSUL General Assembly during the 2023/2024 academic year. This is due to each university having obtained an official 'license' from the Ministry to engage and participate in university sports activities under FSUL (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). As per the participants' age, the FSUL follows the age eligibility of FISU, which is currently 25 years old. However, at the request of a significant number of universities, it was exceptionally extended to 26 for the academic year 2023/2024 (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024).

In the 2023/2024 academic year, these are the sports in which the FSUL organizes competitions in: Team sports: basketball, volleyball, futsal, handball (for both genders) and football (men only). In addition to the following individual sports for both men and women: swimming, table tennis, tennis, taekwondo, skiing, muay thai, track and field and chess. Furthermore, there are concrete plans to add: squash and padel (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). In early 2024, Mr. Sami Garabedian had a gentleman's agreement with Mr. Ziad Saadeh,

one of the Executive Board members, to take over for him to become the FSUL president until 2025 (personal communication with Mr. Sami Garabedian, 2024). The following are the 13 members of the FSUL Executive Board currently in 2024:

-President: Mr. Ziad Saadeh (AUST)

-Vice President 1: Mr. Ahmad Hazer (LU)

-Vice President 2: Mr. Edgard Azzi **(**UA)

-Adviser 1: Mr. Sami Garabedian (LAU)

-Adviser 2: Mr. Ghaleb Halimi (UOB)

-General Secretary: Mr. Omar Bakri (BAU)

-Treasurer: Mr. Awad Merhi (LIU)

-Secretary of National Teams Affairs: Mr. Maroun Khoury (USJ)

-Secretary of International Relations: Mr. Khalil Yassin (PU)

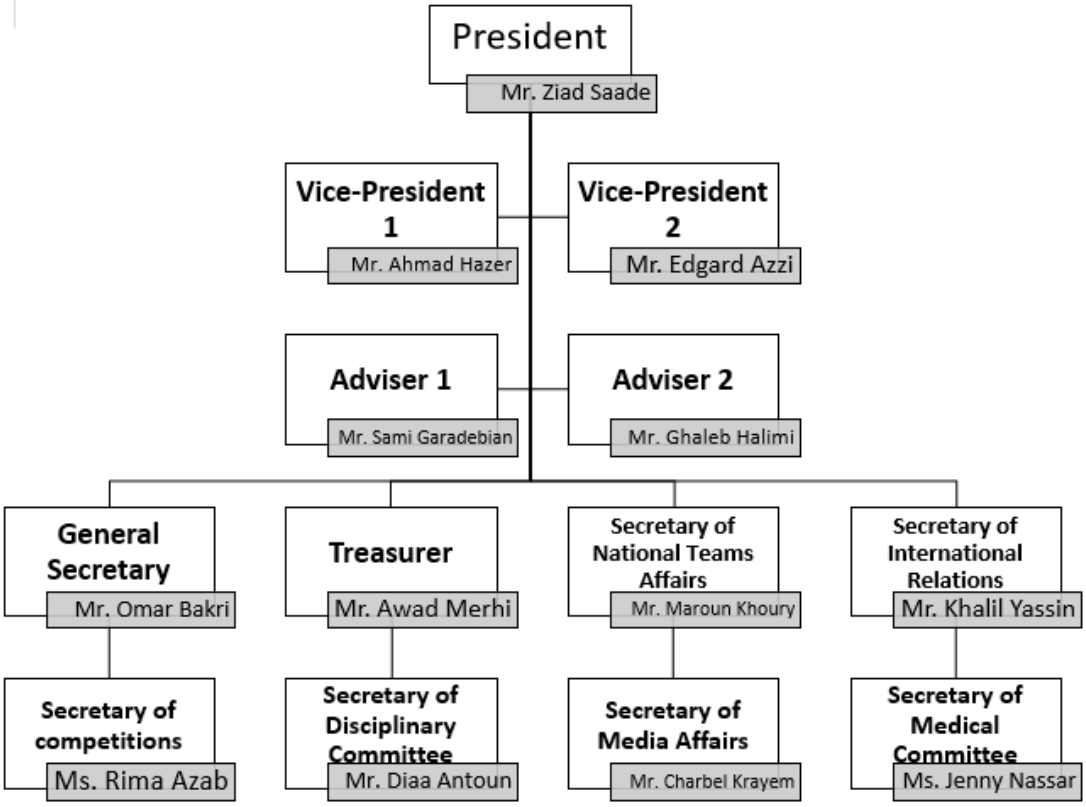
-Secretary of Competitions: Ms. Rima Azab (AUB)

-Secretary of Disciplinary Committee: Mr. Diaa Antoun (CITYU)

-Secretary of Media Affairs: Mr. Charbel Krayem (Independent)

-Secretary of Medical Committee: Ms. Jenny Nassar (USEK)

Figure 15: *The 13 Members of the FSUL's Executive Board in 2024*



Note. Data retrieved via personal communication with S. Garabedian on (2024).

Moreover, in the second FSUL Executive Board in 2024, which also consisted of 13 members, eight of them—AUST, UA, LAU, UOB, BAU, USJ, AUB, and USEK—are considered elite universities, representing 61.53% of the FSUL Executive Board. These eight members represent 80% of the USC universities present on the 2024 FSUL Executive Board. The percentages of such members on the FSUL Executive Boards in 2021 and 2024 were notably high—46.15% and 61.53%, respectively—clearly indicating the substantial influence of these elite universities on the university sports sector in Lebanon. Such elevated figures suggest that a majority of USC universities (60% in 2021 and 80% in 2024) transitioned from their own competitions, following their discontinuation, into active roles within the FSUL Executive Boards.

To continue the investigation into the history of university sports in Lebanon, it is essential to broaden the perspective to include the foundational educational policies that shaped these institutions. A full understanding of the context in which Lebanese university sports have evolved requires an examination of the historical influences that have guided the country's educational landscape. In particular, French and American educational policies have left a lasting imprint on Lebanese academic institutions, shaping their structure, curricula, and extracurricular activities. This investigation will provide a deeper understanding of how external influences have impacted the development and transformation of university education and sports in Lebanon.

Chapter 4: Historical Perspectives on Lebanese Educational Policy: French and American Influence on Lebanese Educational Institutions

Introduction

Throughout the centuries, Lebanon's history and culture have been shaped by a variety of forces, with American and French influence playing a particularly prominent role in recent times. Lebanon experienced significant influence from Western and French interests in the region, mainly focused on safeguarding Christian minorities—particularly the Maronites—and bolstering the French presence in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Foreign influence was particularly evident in the educational system. Extensive missionary efforts, which began in the mid-17th century and escalated in the mid-19th century due to rivalry between Catholic and Protestant missionaries, further strengthened this trend. The Lazarite priests founded the initial French school in Mount Lebanon in 1734. The Orient College in Ghazir was founded by Jesuits in 1843, becoming the primary French missionary school in the area. In 1920, when the French received their mandate, the Service de l'Instruction Publique became responsible for supervising educational policy and

ensuring that every school under its jurisdiction conducted classes in French. The decree designated French and Arabic as official languages, and the implemented education systems reflected this. French authorities revitalized the public elementary schools from the Ottoman era, with French as the language of instruction (Marcus, 2016). The French did not establish a system for public secondary education. Instead, they put significant effort into providing education through private high schools. By 1942, there were a total of 273 French secondary schools in Lebanon. As a result, Beirut did not have public secondary education until 1951 with educational services provided exclusively by privately-owned establishments (Marcus, 2016).

The development of Lebanon's prominent university system was largely influenced by foreign investments and missionary efforts in the field of education. The establishment of the Syrian Protestant College in 1863, later renamed the American University of Beirut, and the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ), with their associated facilities such as libraries and publishing houses, solidified the presence and influence of French (and English) in Lebanon's educational and cultural landscape (Marcus, 2016). French and American missionary schools have contributed to the traditional link between specific religious and class groups, and to language education and training. Maronites were more likely to attend schools operated by the French. This resulted in the integration of Western customs into social, traditional, and political life. French education was also associated with the political and economic elite, and with those who could afford expensive private education (Marcus, 2016). Overall, French influence has deep historical roots in Lebanon's colonial past and cultural evolution, while American influence has grown significantly in recent years, particularly in the economic, educational, and political spheres. Both factors have played a role in forming Lebanon's intricate identity and its modern social structure (Marcus, 2016).

It is essential to shed light on the American and French influence on Lebanon, as it dates back several centuries and is evident in education (schools and universities), politics, and economics. As this study focuses on the North American and French sports models in universities and their influence on the Lebanese university sports model, it is especially important to highlight the historical influence of these two nations on Lebanon.

4.1 Lebanon's Linguistic Mosaic: French and English in Focus

Founded in 1534 by a group of students, the Society of Jesus became known for its Jesuit missionaries as one of the most active missionary orders in 'the age of awakening of the French missions' (Gül, 2015). The Jesuits started in Europe where they opened schools, colleges, and seminaries, only to expand internationally to offer valuable educational and religious services in French to communities around the world, as part of an initiative to comply with the basic principles of the Order and to align with France's political and economic expansion (Gül, 2015).

In the 16th century, the Jesuits were sent by the Holy See to the Ottoman Empire, namely Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt (Gül, 2015). By the second half of the 17th century, Jesuit missions extended to Aleppo, Tripoli, Damascus, and Sidon, and arrived in Antoura by 1656 and establish the College of Antoura as the first French school in the Levantine region (Gül, 2015). This college played a significant role in transmitting French language and culture in the Levant, thus becoming a center of French education and Catholic faith among Maronites and other Christians in Mount Lebanon. American-based universities, originating from Christian Churches such as the Maronite and Greek Orthodox in the Near East, attempted to influence the Arab community while preserving its Arab and Muslim roots (Nauffal & Nasser, 2007). The American missionaries first started their work in 1822; soon after, in 1831, they transferred the American Press from Malta to Beirut and printed books on geography, algebra, biology, and religion (Matthew & Akrawi, 1949). Over the

years, American missionaries intensified their efforts and established around 133 schools across different cities and villages in Lebanon (Matthew & Akrawi, 1949). To further emphasize their religious affiliations, the French focused on the position of their missionaries within the Ottoman Empire. They worked on increasing their activities and founded a strong base between the 17th and 18th Centuries, until their influence peaked across both Christian and Muslim communities (Gül, 2015). Moving on, by the beginning of the 18th century, the French Jesuits had already managed to strengthen their presence in both Syria and Lebanon, in addition to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. Regardless, the Jesuits purchased land in Beirut in 1839 to create a permanent station and established Ghazir, Mount Lebanon, as their activity center (Gül, 2015).

In Ghazir, the Jesuits established a seminary in 1846 and later established a French College alongside it in 1855, a long-awaited plan that started in 1843 (Gül, 2015). This college gained significant traction and became a leading institution in the Levant in terms of both personnel and budget; it did not only compete with powerful Protestant institutions but also acted as a proof of French power against Britain, Austria, and Russia (Gül, 2015). Their newly founded power, however, disturbed the Orthodox Church in the East and the Ottoman administration, which took steps toward reestablishing control. Unfortunately, France faced another revolution in 1848 that led to the founding of the Third Republic, replacing the collapsing monarchy. Yet, the French managed to maintain their religious protection regardless of the regime change as Louis Napoleon, the president at the time, established a connection with the Church. Thus, the new administration showed further support to the existing missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and across the world in an attempt to reflect its concern and understanding. This support was primarily directed to the Eastern Christians and the Lebanese Maronites, in particular (Gül, 2015). Hence, the French's educational impact remains undeniable especially in terms of financial aid. According to reports from the

French Consul in Beirut, there were around 140 students at the Antoura College in 1861 who fully depended on French funding from the government, Oeuvre des Ecoles d'Orient, and Comité de secours de Beyrouth (Gül, 2015). In attempt to influence more Maronites and the Greek Melchites, the missions focused on educational activities. They transferred the Ghazir College to Beirut in 1875 and established the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ) which quickly gained popularity and necessitated immediate faculty recruitment (Gül, 2015). Given the vast expansion, it is notable to mention that Beirut and Mount Lebanon appear to be the main concern of the Jesuits despite their attempts to diversify their influence to include Damascus and Aleppo (Gül, 2015).

In the 19th century, Lebanon was officially marked by its bilingual educational system as French, Russian, British, and American missionaries dominated the intellectual and cultural scene (Ziadeh, 1957). Thus, Arabic and foreign language were used as the medium for instruction (Ziadeh, 1957). As previously discussed, French Catholic schools were concentrated in Maronite areas and their students became known as the Jesuit-educated; whereas, Angelican schools were mostly founded in Durzi areas and their students were referred to as American or English educated (Haddad, 1997). Unfortunately, said categorizations further promoted the use of language to determine religious affiliation which entrenched the sectarian division across the Lebanese. Thus, people bilingual in Arabic and French were most likely educated Christians, Maronites and Roman Catholics, while bilingualism in Arabic and English became an identifier for Sunni Muslims, Druze, and Greek Orthodox Christians (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003; Frayha, 2003; Joseph, 2004). Additionally, given that France assumed responsibility over education in the region, the system bore close resemblance to the French system with the exception of Arabic replacing other languages of instruction within the curriculums (Kurani, 1936). In the Lebanese Republic, the primary

school program included Arabic, French, arithmetic, history, geography, drawing, physical education, general science, object lessons, morals, hygiene, religious instruction, and sewing, with instruction divided between Arabic and French (Kurani, 1936). With the French Jesuits came the belief that the Maronites were the 'defenders of the Catholic faith' in the Orient, which led them to focus their powers in maintaining a cultural, religious, and political relationship with Lebanese Christians (Baladi, 2018). Over time, French became a general educational language and a cultural privilege among upper-class Maronites, only to further spread to other religious groups like Muslim families who sent their children to missionary schools in the 20th century (Baladi, 2018).

As the 20th century progressed, the role of the English language was on the rise given the Protestant missionaries who built schools in Lebanon. One of these missionary efforts led to the founding of the American University of Beirut that played a significant part in highlighting the value of Anglophone and American culture within the region as it attracted Lebanese elites as well as students across the Middle East. This, along with the rise of globalization and the United States' emergence as an international hegemonic power, led to a boom in the English language, diminishing French influence in Lebanon after its full independence in 1943. Although American Protestants founded various prominent missionary schools, their methods were not directly aligned to their government's political goals, unlike French missionaries. The French regarded Catholic missionary schools mainly as tools to enhance France's political connections with Lebanon, while American Protestants emphasized promoting the English language and the Protestant religion (Baladi, 2018). In that light, the American Protestant missionary schools aimed to attract a diverse audience and did so by promoting instructions in vernacular Arabic which resonated most with the general Lebanese population (Baladi, 2018). Demand for the English language was further re-

flected by the Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD) established by the Lebanese government in 1971 as a sub-unit within the Ministry of Education that overtook the role of introducing educational planning, curricula revisions, textbook compilations, and defining the requirements and objectives for official examinations. The Centre's efforts began as it developed a dedicated English-language curriculum alongside existing teaching methods. In post-civil war Lebanon, English received a boost and became an essential form of expression that served several functions (Esseili, 2017). English's evolution into an international language for business and trade endeavors, general communication, and technology curated the ideal environment for it to develop in Lebanon, where it had been in use for more than a century (Ghaith & Shabaan, 1996). Thus, the bulk of private schools established throughout the civil war adopted English as their medium of instruction throughout all cycles irrespective of their ideological and religious orientations (Ghaith & Shabaan, 1996). English, then, became more popular when the Lebanese government initiated a new curriculum promoting trilingualism in 1997 (Ghaith & Shabaan, 1996). Bilingualism in Arabic and one foreign language (English or French) became mandatory, with general competency expected in the third language (Esseili, 2017).

The above explained approach was applied mainly in secondary and higher education levels, such that history, geography, and Arabic–language and literature–were meant to be taught in Modern Standard Arabic. Natural sciences, however, were to be taught in either English or French, depending on the school's system. In the public sector, which required minimal or no fees, Arabic was used as the main language of instruction; however, the general public preferred private fee-based education as individuals could choose their preferred Francophone or Anglo-American system (Thonhauser, 2000). Typically, the Lebanese Baccalaureate examination was to be applied across all schools in relevance to their language of instruction. Even though English lacks official

status in Lebanon, it is still used on multiple levels. For instance, English plays a significant role in the country. Out of 41 private institutes of higher education in Lebanon and one state university, Lebanese University (LU), 28 use English as a language of instruction, ten of which use English exclusively (Esseili, 2017). Overall, the majority of these institutions (universities, colleges, and religious studies institutes) are modelled after the American system of education. The language choice, however, could be linked to practical and economic attributes; for example, upon its founding the University of Balamand (UOB) was a trilingual university that used Arabic, French, and English until it experienced an 'identity crisis' due to its lack of a 'clear policy regarding the language of instruction' (Annous, 2006). Another example would be the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ) whose president introduced the Sufficient and Necessary 15 English program in the late 90s and requested all students pass the Georgetown University English Proficiency Test in order to receive their diplomas, despite using French as the main medium of instruction (Minkara, 2013).

In addition to schools, universities, and religious studies institutions, there are several centers that focus on the promotion of the English language in Lebanon. The British Council and the America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, otherwise known as AMIDEAST, which closely collaborates with the American Embassy in Beirut, are known to be two of the top players in this field. Both institutions, among others, tend to offer language classes and teacher-preparation workshops (Esseili, 2017). Similarly, other professional organizations like Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages in Lebanon (TESOL) and the Association of Teachers of English in Lebanon (ATEL) tend to focus on teaching the language and organizing workshops, seminars, lectures, and annual national, regional, and international conferences to further intensify and pro-

mote English in the region (Esseili, 2017). With globalization, English has evolved into an international language that dominates the fields of diplomacy, business, academia, and technology (Baladi, 2018). In Lebanon, the number of Anglophone speakers and institutions has increased since the missionaries began their promotion of the language as English proficiency has become a social and professional necessity. This led to the inevitable decline of the French language and culture considering that younger people tend to regard English as easier and easier to learn which consequently affected the acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic among younger generations (Baladi, 2018).

The status of the three languages in Lebanon is often regarded as a subject of public discourse. To this day, some people still identify with a 'special form of Lebanese nationalism, which emphasizes the bicultural and bilingual character of the Lebanese nation' according to Versteegh (1997). This nationalism can be linked to the idea that Lebanon is a European country stuck in the Arab world despite its tight historical link to France. One example of this ideology appeared when French President Jacques Chirac was asked a question in English at a press conference only to refuse to answer because he was in a 'Francophone country' and would only acknowledge 'questions asked in French' (Versteegh, 1997). Lebanon, today, is often regarded as a true trilingual country that incorporates all three languages, French, English, and Arabic, in various forms, especially since its economy regards tourism as a primary source of income (Baladi, 2018). Additionally, a system of official public exams was authorized based on the French system that would allow students to progress from one grade level to the next based on their academic performance. The grades would also determine access to civil service and professional sectors (Ghaith & Shabaan, 1996). Article 13 of the Cultural, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation Agreement signed between the French and Lebanese governments on October 14, 1993, and concluded by the Parliament

pursuant to Law No. 354/1994 affirmed the principle of equivalence of the Lebanese and French baccalaureate certificates and allowed students from both countries to enroll in their universities and take entrance exams (Legal Informatics Center - Lebanese University, n.d.)

4.2 French and American Influence on Lebanese Educational Higher Institutions

Lebanon's higher-education system ranks as one of the oldest within its region dating back to 1866, when Daniel Bliss founded the Syrian Protestant College, later known as the American University of Beirut (AUB). Less than ten years later, the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth was founded by the Jesuits in 1875, followed by the Beirut College for Women in 1948, which was later known as the Lebanese American University (LAU). Finally, the Lebanese University (LU) was established in 1951. Overall, the country's educational system was shaped by two cultures: French and American, with the language of instruction depending on the institution's background (Al-Chaer, 2020). Some institutions, however, managed to implement a dual-cultural curriculum and others incorporated Egyptian-Arab, Canadian, or German models, with programs offered in either Arabic, French, or English (Al-Chaer, 2020).

During the mandate period, the French encouraged most if not all missionary activities (Khoury, 1968). Although the Jesuits played the largest role in establishing schools in Lebanon, several other missionaries such as the Lazarists, Capucins, Franciscan, Christian Brothers, and the Frères Maristes founded scholarly establishments in the country; similarly, orders such as Les Filles de la Charité, Les Dames de Nazareth, Les Soeurs de la Charité, Les Soeurs de Besanson, and the Franciscan Nuns of Mary operated schools across numerous Lebanese villages. All these schools were accountable to the Haut Commissariat Français and not to the Lebanese Government, yet teachers included both French and Lebanese individuals in addition to monks and nuns (Khoury, 1968; Shaaban & Ghaith, 1996). Over this period, French was mandatory starting from

kindergarten and students were subjected to primary and baccalaureate French exams that favored the French language and required high proficiency levels as a foundation (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1996).

Overall, higher education establishments that constitute the Lebanese educational sector emerged from various identities, models, and cultures (Freiha, 1997). Admission to the private educational sector depended on passing a language test, English or French, depending on the system of the Higher Education Institution (HEI). Some programs within the institutions could require additional examinations that test students' knowledge in several fields like GMAT, SAT, Math, and Sciences. As a general rule, however, all private HEIs adhering to the American model imposed two exams, English and an optional Science test that depended on each student's desired track; as for HEIs adopting the French or Egyptian models, entrance exams specific to specializations were required in addition to the language test (Metni, 2017). Financially, the private sector was known to charge more than the public sector which was funded by the Lebanese government. However, it appeared that American-patterned universities had the highest fees across the private sector and were thus unaffordable for average-income Lebanese citizens which constitute the majority of Lebanon's population (Iskandar, 2001). This explains why these universities were more likely to attract wealthier students from other Arab countries. French-patterned universities, on the other hand, seemed to be more economically sufficient for average income earners which made them all the more accessible and satisfactory for French-speaking Lebanese people (Nauffal, 2009).

As previously mentioned, institutional patterns followed by Lebanese universities ranged among French, American, and Egyptian referential models. This diversity was highly substantial as it provided rising academics with a plethora of options and educational models to pick from

(Nauffal, 2009). The American academic model was based on a credit-point course system that included core requirements and electives with periodic student assessment; English is the language of instruction (Nauffal, 2009). Whereas the French model was built around mandatory year-long courses followed by end-of-year exams. Despite this policy, the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ) developed ties with the University of Lyon in France and adopted a similar system to that of American-patterned universities and most universities in Europe. This shift aimed to provide Lebanese and Arab students with mobility to Western countries through transferable modules, since the language of instruction is French (Nauffal, 2009). Upon the foundation of the American University of Beirut, Arabic was the main medium of instruction for several classes including philosophy, natural sciences and medicine (Glass & Reuschel, 1992; Jeha, 2004). Even though using English was optional, students' proficiency was insufficient for academic pursuits (Jeha, 2004). The case remained as such until Arabic was no longer considered an 'origin' language but rather 'one of two languages and second to English' (Glass & Reuschel, 1992). However, the adoption process happened gradually over the span of ten years (Esseili, 2017). According to Bashshur (1964), the transformation from Arabic to English made it impossible to solely rely on Arabic-speaking teachers or on course translations from English to Arabic. Thus, English became the language of 'progress' that allowed AUB to replace Arabic speaking instructors with American lecturers and professors (Esseili, 2017).

On a different note, the utilization of universities as soft power was another reason behind France and the USA's relentless support (Bertelsen, 2018). Soft power by definition is a persuasive approach that involves economic, cultural, and political influence to shape international relations (Nye, 2004). France's and the USA's debuts in pursuing soft power were in the 1860s through the

American University of Beirut (AUB) and the 1880s through the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ), respectively (Bertelsen, 2018). Both universities contributed to their countries' national soft power by attracting interest towards education, language, and liberal norms among elite individuals in Lebanon; they continue to receive soft power policy attention today in different forms. AUB, for instance, plays a central role in applying the Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program in Lebanon as per the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), a vital part of current U.S. soft power tactics in the region. Similarly, France continues to support USJ through different programs for both national and international soft power objectives (Bertelsen, 2018).

The American University of Beirut's pursuit of U.S. financial support began with its founding when Bliss held a meeting with President Abraham Lincoln whose offer did not extend past moral encouragement and appreciation (Bertelsen, 2018). Unlike the French government whose strategy of pressing national soft power through the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth was clear from its foundation year, the U.S. took almost a century to support American universities in the Middle East for developmental and soft power reasons (Bertelsen, 2018). AUB, then, became incorporated and accredited in the U.S., had American presidents and Board of Trustees based in New York City, and a predominantly American-educated faculty. Additionally, joining the Near East College Association (NECA) in 1919 allowed AUB to solidify its ties with multiple American associations abroad, and it also facilitated the flow of financial support and the recruitment of American professors (Bashshur, 1964; Gül, 2015). On the other hand, USJ had deep relations between the local French Mandate authorities and the Jesuit missionaries who constantly opposed attempts to distance the university from Arab communities in the region (Bertelsen, 2018). Additionally, faculties of USJ were branches of the University of Lyon, staff were mostly supplied by faculty committees from both Paris and Lyon, and the presidents were predominantly French. This

support showcases the French recognition of the importance of the university in promoting French culture and language, while also fostering elite-level ties to France (Bertelsen, 2018). Both AUB and USJ have left indelible marks on Lebanon's educational landscape. AUB embodies American ideals of liberal arts education, while USJ serves as a bastion of French influence and culture in the region. Their distinct histories and missions reflect the complex interplay of international relations, religious affiliations, and educational aspirations that have shaped Lebanon's higher education sector.

Table 13: *Top Eight Universities in Lebanon According to the QS World University Rankings (2024)*

University name	Year of establishment	University type	University educational system model
1-American University of Beirut (AUB)	1866	Private, non-sectarian	**American system of education** -The primary language of instruction is English -The system follows the American credit-based system -It utilizes the American grading system

2-Lebanese University (LU)	1951	Public, government control	**French system of education**
3- Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ)	1874	Private, Catholic (French Jesuit missionaries)	**French system of education** -General admission requirements for the first year include a French language exam -The university follows the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)
4-Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)	1938	Private, not-for-profit Catholic university	**American system of education** -Study approach: credits system- -Compatible with the system in force in U.S. and Canadian universities.

			-American grading system
5-Lebanese American University (LAU)	1924	Private, secular	**American system of education** -The teaching language is only English -American grading system -American credit-based system
6-Beirut Arab University (BAU)	1960	Private	**Hybrid: American and French system of education** -American credit-based system -American grading system -French system regarding the medicine program
7-University of Balamand (UOB)	1988	Private institution, secular	**American system of education**

			-General conditions for admission to the first year: French or English language exam -American grading system -American credit-based system
8-Notre Dame University–Louaize (NDU)	1987	Private, Catholic university	**American system of education** -The main language is only English -The university adopts the unit system (Credits)

An investigation of Lebanese universities and the educational models they adopt reveals the following. According to the QS World University Rankings in 2024, the table shows the top eight universities in Lebanon are (in order from 1st to 8th): American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanese University (LU), Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ), Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Lebanese American University (LAU), Beirut Arab University (BAU), University of Balamand (UOB), Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU).

According to the University of Balamand's official website, most majors follow the American system of education and are taught in English, with a few programs offered in French and Arabic (UOB, 2019). Moreover, the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) provides high-quality American-style education to its students and plans to develop leaders in Lebanon, the Middle East, and internationally (USEK, 2024). Additionally, Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) has obtained accreditation from the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), and follows the American system of higher education (NDU, 2024). However, a study conducted by BouJaoude and El Mouhayar (2012) showed that the Lebanese University follows the French model of education, with a curriculum initially structured around years rather than individual courses. According to the Students' Affairs Department at Beirut Arab University (BAU), the university adopts a combination of both the American and French educational systems. Both American and French educational models have profoundly shaped the Lebanese educational system, each bringing distinct philosophies and practices. The integration of French and American influences has created a unique sports model in Lebanese universities, which will be explored in the next section.

Introduction to Part III: Empirical Analysis and Comparative Study

Part III delivers the empirical foundation of this thesis, transitioning from historical context to a focused examination of the current Lebanese university sports framework. Employing a mixed-methods strategy, this section analyzes the structural reality of the system from the viewpoints of its key participants.

The analysis begins with data gathered from the field. Chapter 1 presents the findings from the questionnaire aimed at student-athletes, whereas Chapter 2 offers the institutional viewpoint by examining the results from the questionnaire targeted at university sports directors.

Chapter 3 utilizes these findings to define the Lebanese model, particularly analyzing if it operates as a 'hybrid' that integrates components from both the North American and French systems. Chapter 4 subsequently positions Lebanese universities on a spectrum between these two international frameworks, employing two different methodologies. The initial part of this chapter emphasizes Quantitative Results obtained from Google Forms, employing percentages, charts, and fundamental statistics to highlight overarching trends. The second part presents Qualitative Results via a thematic analysis with IRaMuTeQ software, showcasing Word Clouds, Reinert (CHD) Analysis, and Similarity Graphs to reveal deeper insights from student feedback.

Ultimately, Chapter 5 presents an in-depth comparative analysis and discussion. It compares the Lebanese system to the U.S. and France in terms of media exposure, athlete support frameworks (NIL and SHN), and financial resources. This section ends with a case study of Saint Joseph University (Club 1875), demonstrating how these global models are tailored to fit a local Lebanese institution. Through the synthesis of these findings, Part III uncovers the distinctive

structural dynamics of university sports in Lebanon and lays the foundation for the research's final conclusions.

Chapter 1: The Characteristics of Lebanese University Sport: A Hybrid Between the North American and French University Sports Models?

The objective of this part is to address the characteristics of the Lebanese university sports model in order to understand its position and structure. The methodological framework relied on structured questionnaires administered to two specific groups: student-athletes and sports directors. The questionnaires featured a combination of both closed and open-ended questions designed for the specific context of each group. Responses were gathered in digital format and organized using Excel, which served as the primary tool for documenting and managing the data. The research took place in the 2023/2024 academic year, guaranteeing that the results represent current and relevant experiences within the university sports environment.

After conducting questionnaires with student-athletes and sports directors from Lebanese universities participating in the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL) during the 2023/2024 academic year, this study successfully defined the Lebanese university sports model and clarified its position within the two comparative sports models.

1.1 The Content of This Questionnaire: The Results of the Questionnaire Directed to Student-Athletes

This questionnaire is tailored for student-athletes involved in the 2023/2024 academic year at 27 universities affiliated with the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL).

Table 14: *FSUL Registered Universities for the 2023/2024 Academic Year*

1. Holy Spirit University of Kaslik **(USEK)**	15. Phoenicia University **(PU)**

2. Antonine University **(UA)**	16. Lebanese Canadian University **(LCU)**
3. American University of Science and Technology **(AUST)**	17. American University of Beirut **(AUB)**
4. Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth **(USJ)**	18. American University of Technology **(AUT)**
5. Notre Dame University-Louaize **(NDU)**	19. Modern University for Business and Science **(MUBS)**
6. University of Balamand **(UOB)**	20. Islamic University of Lebanon **(IUL)**
7. Arab Open University **(AOU)**	21. Université La Sagesse **(ULS)**
8. Al Maaref University **(MU)**	22. City University **(CITYU)**
9. Rafik Hariri University **(RHU)**	23. Beirut Arab University **(BAU)**
10. Haigazian University **(HU)**	24. Lebanese German University **(LGU)**
11. Arts, Sciences and Technology University **(AUL)**	25. Matn University College of Technology **(MUC)**
12. Lebanese American University **(LAU-Beirut Campus)**	26. Lebanese University **(LU)**
13. Lebanese American University **(LAU-Byblos Campus)**	
14. AZM University **(AZM)**	27. Lebanese International University **(LIU)**

Note. According to the president of the FSUL, Mr. Sami Garabedian, there are 27 universities registered in the FSUL competitions for the 2023/2024 academic year, comprising 26 private universities and 1 public university.

For the academic year 2023/2024, five universities—AUL, AZM, MUBS, LU, and MUC—belonged to the FSUL but did not participate in FSUL competitions. Nonetheless, the questionnaire collected responses from 24 of the 27 FSUL member universities, with 131 student-athletes sharing their insights.

The following 24 universities participated in this questionnaire:

Table 15: *List of the 24 Universities (FSUL Members) That Participated in the Study*

1. Holy Spirit University of Kaslik **(USEK)**	14. Phoenicia University **(PU)**
2. Antonine University **(UA)**	15**.** Lebanese Canadian University **(LCU)**
3. American University of Science and Technology **(AUST)**	16. American University of Beirut **(AUB)**
4. Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth **(USJ)**	17**.** American University of Technology **(AUT)**
5. Notre Dame University-Louaize **(NDU)**	18. Modern University for Business and Science **(MUBS)**
6. University of Balamand **(UOB)**	19. Islamic University of Lebanon **(IUL)**
7. Arab Open University **(AOU)**	20. Université La Sagesse **(ULS)**
8. Al Maaref University **(MU)**	21. City University **(CITYU)**
9. Rafik Hariri University **(RHU)**	22. Beirut Arab University **(BAU)**
10. Haigazian University **(HU)**	23. Lebanese German University **(LGU)**
11. Arts, Sciences and Technology University **(AUL)**	24. Matn University College of Technology **(MUC)**

12. Lebanese American University **(LAU-Beirut Campus)**	
13. Lebanese American University **(LAU-Byblos Campus)**	

In an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the various sports featured in the competitions among Lebanese universities under the FSUL, an interview was conducted in 2024 with Mr. Sami Garabedian, former president of the FSUL.

Table 16: *List of Sports Recognized by the FSUL for the 2023/2024 Academic Year*

Team Sports	**Individual Sports**
1-Basketball (Both Genders)	1-Swimming (Both Genders)
2-Volleyball (Both Genders)	2-Table Tennis (Both Genders)
3-Futsal (Both Genders)	3-Tennis (Both Genders)
4-Handball (Both Genders)	4-Taekwondo (Both Genders)
5-Football (Men)	5-Skiing (Both Genders)
6-Padel	6-Muay Boxing (Both Genders)
	7-Track and Field (Both Genders)
	8-Chess (Both Genders)
	9-Squash

These are the recognized sports by the FSUL for the 2023/2024 academic year, categorized into team and individual sports: Team sports include basketball, volleyball, futsal, padel, handball

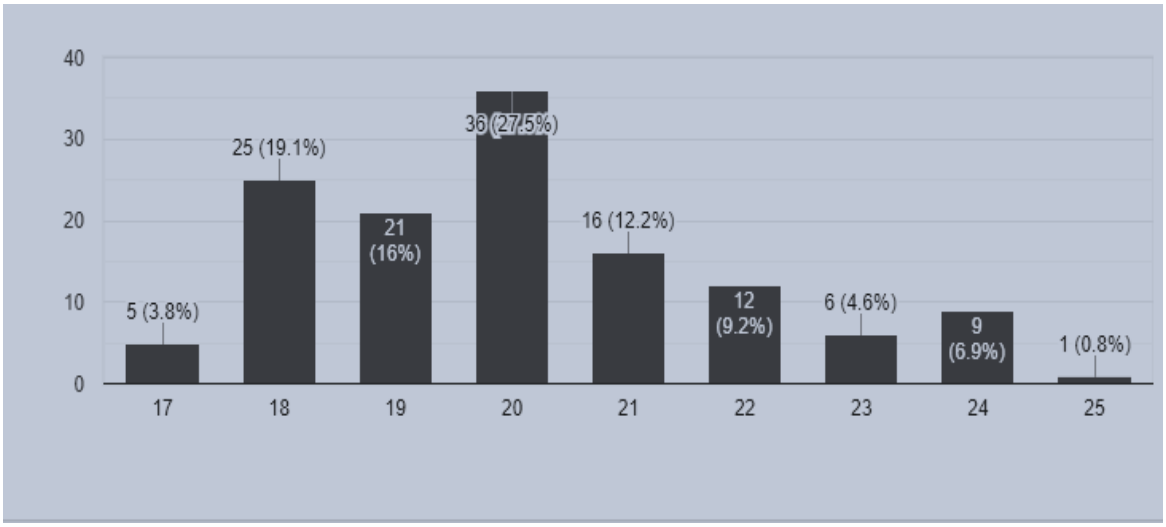
(for both genders), and football (men only). In addition, the following individual sports are available for both genders: swimming, table tennis, tennis, taekwondo, squash, skiing, muay thai, track and field, and chess.

1.1.1 Student-Athletes' Participants: Age Categories

According to former FSUL president Mr. Sami Garabedian, "we usually follow the age eligibility of FISU, which currently is 25 years old. Basically, for events in 2024, athletes must be born between January 1, 1999, and December 31, 2006. However, at the request of a considerable number of universities, the eligibility age was exceptionally extended to 26 for the 2023/2024 season". Because of this age range, the results of the student-athletes who fall within this range were considered.

In this questionnaire, the age category ranged between 17 and 25 years old. As observed, the majority of the participants are in the age category of 20 years old (36 student-athletes; 27.5%). The least represented age category is 25 years old, with only one student-athlete (0.8%) participating in this questionnaire.

Figure 16: *Age Categories of Student-Athletes Participating in the Study*



Note. This figure represents the distribution of participants (N=131) based on their age at the time of the questionnaire.

The majority of participants fall within the 18 to 22 age range with a total of 25 (age 18), 21 (19), 36 (20), 16 (21), and 12 (22), amounting to 110 student-athletes with a cumulative percentage of 19.1% (age 18), 16% (19), 27.5% (20), 12.2% (21), and 9.2% (22), totaling 84% of participants between the 18-22 age range.

In addition to their age, the participants in this questionnaire, who are student-athletes of both genders, belong to various varsity teams across different sports disciplines eligible for FSUL competitions in the 2023/2024 academic year: futsal, volleyball, table tennis, swimming, football, squash, tennis, skiing, chess, handball, taekwondo, track and field, and basketball.

Table 17: *List of Sports Practiced by the Student-Athletes (both genders) Participating in the Study*

1-Futsal	8-Skiing
2-Volleyball	9-Chess
3-Table Tennis	10-Handball
4-Swimming	11-Taekwondo
5-Football	12-Track and Field
6-Squash	13-Basketball
7-Tennis	

1.1.2 Training System of the Student-Athletes with the Varsity Teams

A key discovery from this questionnaire was the examination of the training systems used by student-athletes in their varsity teams. This element provided important perspectives and offers

better insight into the number of training days and hours per week for student-athletes in Lebanese universities. One hundred twenty-nine student-athletes responded to this question by indicating how many days and hours per week they train with their varsity teams.

Table 18: *Training System (Frequency and Timing) of Student-Athletes per Week Within Varsity Teams*

Days of Training and Time (per week)	**Number of Student-Athletes**	**Percentage (%)**
0 days	5	3.87%
1 day 1 hour	3	2.32%
1 day 1 hour 30 minutes	17	13.17%
1 day 1 hour 45 minutes	1	0.77%
1 day 2 hours	13	10.07%
2 days 2 hours	4	3.10%
2 days 3 hours	34	26.35%
2 days 4 hours	23	17.82%
3 days 3 hours	4	3.10%
3 days 4 hours 30 minutes	15	11.62%
3 days 6 hours	8	6.20%
4 days 6 hours	1	0.77%
4 days 8 hours	1	0.77%
TOTAL	**129**	**≈100%**

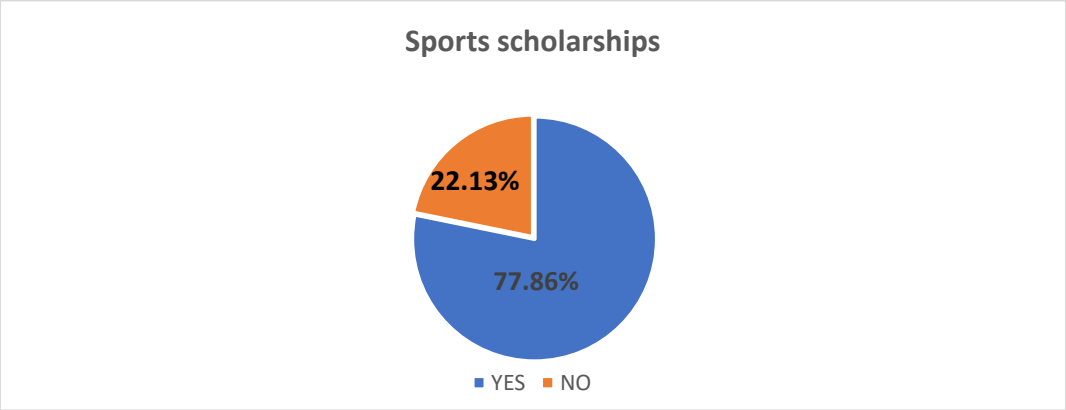
The training schedules reported by student-athletes revealed a wide range of durations. Significantly, 5 student-athletes (3.87% of those surveyed) indicated that they practiced for 0 days per week. Three student-athletes (2.32%) practiced for 1 day and 1 hour each week, whereas 17 student-athletes (13.17%) practiced for 1 day (1 hour and 30 minutes). Furthermore, 1 student-athlete (0.77%) practiced for 1 day (1 hour and 45 minutes), while 13 participants (10.07%) practiced for 1 day (2 hours). Among those training for two days per week, 4 student-athletes (3.10%) practiced for a total of 2 hours, 34 (26.35%) for 3 hours, and 23 (17.82%) for 4 hours. Additionally, 4 student-athletes (3.10%) practiced for 3 days (3 hours weekly), while 15 (11.62%) practiced for 3 days (4 hours and 30 minutes per week). Moreover, 8 student-athletes (6.20%) practiced for 3 days (6 hours weekly, which is equivalent to 2 hours per day), while 1 student-athlete (0.77%) practiced for 4 days (6 hours, which is equivalent to 1 hour and 30 minutes per day), and another (0.77%) practiced for 4 days and 8 hours (2 hours per day).

In conclusion, the training routines of the student-athletes varied widely, from 0 days per week to a maximum of 4 days totaling 8 hours, averaging 2 hours each day. Remarkably, the most significant group, consisting of 26.35% (34 student-athletes), is classified as training for 2 days and 3 hours each week, equating to around 1 hour and 30 minutes per training session.

1.1.3 Availability of Sports Scholarships Provided by the Universities to their Student-Athletes

Lebanese universities compete against each other in an official tournament organized by the FSUL. Numerous private and public universities compete in various sports, which encourages them to recruit student-athletes to form their teams. As Bergman and Logan (2016) stated, recruiting talented student-athletes is positively associated with success and achievement.

Figure 17: *Availability of Sports Scholarships in Universities*



Note. This chart displays the percentage of respondents who indicated the availability or lack of sports scholarships at their respective institutions (N=131).

In the survey carried out among student-athletes, 131 individuals submitted their responses, representing 100% of the sample. Among the respondents, a substantial number, 102 student-athletes, reported that their universities provide sports scholarships. This answer represents roughly 77.86%, derived from the equation (102×100)/131. On the other hand, 29 student-athletes, constituting approximately 22.13%, indicated that their universities do not offer sports scholarships, as calculated by (29×100)/131.

These results indicate that a significant number of universities actively assist their student-athletes with sports scholarships, emphasizing the role of financial support in fostering athletic involvement and academic achievement. Conversely, a smaller proportion of universities were reported as not offering these scholarships.

1.1.4 Criteria to Gain Sports Scholarships

To identify the criteria for gaining sports scholarships, 108 student-athletes provided their responses on the key criteria they consider important for obtaining sports scholarships. This figure

accounts for 100% of the participants, and their responses identified six main factors affecting scholarship choices. The most commonly noted criterion was demonstrating particular athletic skills, highlighted by 30 student-athletes, representing 27.77% of the replies. This highlights the significance of technical ability in their respective sports, implying that universities focus on talented athletes capable of succeeding in competitions. Subsequently, being chosen for the varsity team became another key factor, with 23 student-athletes (21.29%) acknowledging its importance. This standard illustrates the competitive essence of sports programs, where membership on the team is frequently regarded as a requirement for scholarship eligibility. Moreover, possessing specific sports qualities—such as leadership, character, discipline, and dedication to the team—was emphasized by 15 student-athletes (13.88%). These traits are crucial not just for personal achievement but also for promoting a constructive team atmosphere. Equally significant was the idea of attaining success with the team, acknowledged by 15 student-athletes (13.88%). Outstanding performance in a team setting can greatly improve a student-athlete's chances for scholarships, highlighting the importance of collective achievement. Furthermore, having connections with top national leagues, including Division 1 teams or national squads, was mentioned by 20 student-athletes (18.51%) as an essential factor. This highlights the benefit of being acknowledged at superior competitive tiers, which can attract the interest of scholarship programs. Finally, the significance of academic success, as 5 student-athletes (4.62%) noted that obtaining a specific GPA was important, illustrates the comprehensive perspective many universities adopt in assessing student-athletes. Juggling academics and athletics is crucial for achieving overall success in higher education.

Each university has established various rules and guidelines for awarding sports scholarships to their student-athletes. According to the questionnaire, the highest criteria for the student-

athletes to gain sports scholarships is obtaining specific athletic skills (27.77%) which translates to being technically talented in the practiced sports.

1.1.5 Conditions for Maintaining Sports Scholarships

In a recent survey, respondents shared important perspectives on the crucial elements that student-athletes consider vital for upholding sports scholarships. A sum of 106 responses was gathered, showcasing various viewpoints. The key criterion noted was commitment to the team (attending all training sessions and games), with about 34.90% of participants highlighting the significance of being present at all training sessions and matches. This signifies that universities value student-athletes who show commitment and dependability in their responsibilities. Another important factor highlighted was the need to uphold a specific GPA, as observed by approximately 29.24% of participants. This emphasizes the significance of obtaining acceptable academic results during the scholarship evaluation process, demonstrating the necessity for student-athletes to successfully manage their athletic and academic duties.

Consistent performance in both games and practices (contributing positively to the team) was also highlighted as an important factor, with approximately 32.07% of participants emphasizing the requirement for reliability in both games and practices. This reliability not only improves an individual athlete's image but also plays a crucial role in the team's overall success.

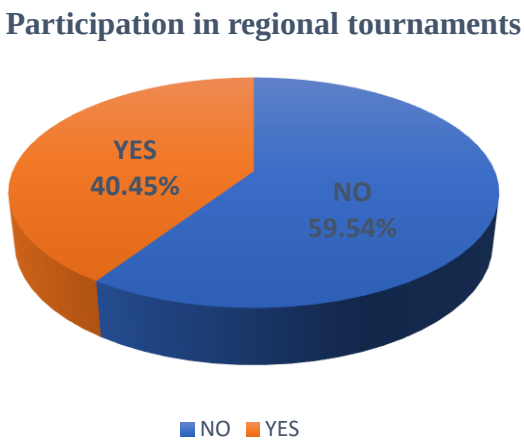
Furthermore, a lesser percentage, around 3.77%, highlighted the significance of being connected with national top division teams and being chosen for the national team. Although this aspect was given less attention, it nevertheless underscores the importance of competitive recognition. In general, the survey findings suggest that dedication to the team (34.90%) is regarded as the most important element for preserving sports scholarships. This perspective highlights the anticipation for student-athletes to be completely involved in their athletic and educational efforts,

emphasizing the importance of commitment and collaboration in attaining success in college sports.

1.1.6 Participation in Regional Tournaments

131 student-athletes responded to this question, offering valuable insights into their universities' involvement in regional tournaments.

Figure 18: *Lebanese Universities' Participation in Regional Sports Tournaments*



Note. This chart presents the frequency of participation in regional tournaments (tournaments organized outside Lebanon) (N=131).

The results showed that a large majority—78 participants—stated that their universities do not take part in these tournaments. This represents approximately 59.54% of the student-athletes surveyed, indicating no involvement in regional events. In contrast, 53 respondents, approximately 40.45%, indicated that their universities participate in regional tournaments. This involvement might signify a dedication to enhancing athletic growth and competitive exposure for student-athletes, emphasizing the varying levels of support offered by various institutions. In summary, these findings highlight a significant gap in regional tournament involvement among universities,

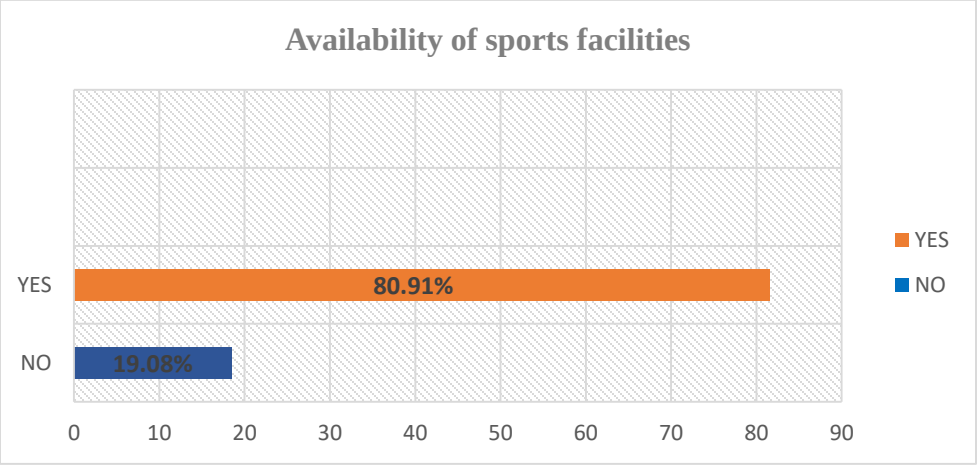
as most student-athletes report that their institutions are not participating in these competitive events.

1.1.7 Availability of Sports Facilities

In a cohort of 131 student-athletes, the findings provide important insights about the accessibility of sports facilities at their respective institutions. Among the respondents, 106 student-athletes (around 80.91%) reported that their universities possess sports facilities.

This notable majority suggests that these institutions are equipped to support the training and competitive requirements of their varsity teams.

Figure 19: *Accessibility of Sports Facilities in Lebanese Universities*



Note. This chart illustrates student perceptions regarding the availability and ease of access to sports facilities on campus (N=131).

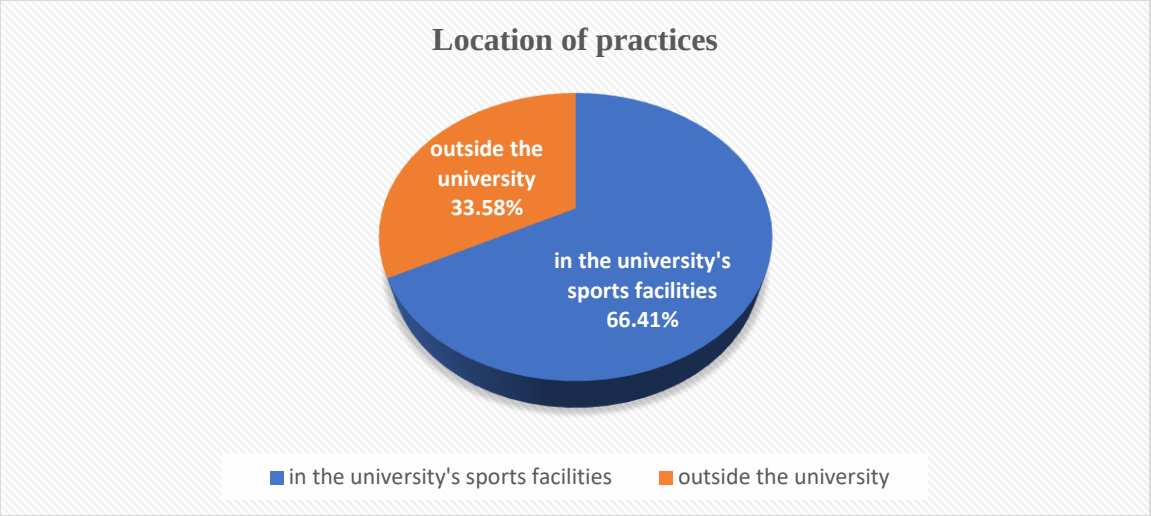
In contrast, 25 student-athletes (approximately 19.08%) reported that their universities do not have sports facilities. This lack of resources may compel athletes to seek alternative options, such as renting external venues for training and competition.

In general, the data highlight a significant gap in facility availability. While most student-athletes benefit from institutional resources, a smaller group faces obstacles that may hinder their athletic development.

1.1.8 Location of Practice with the Varsity Team

Among the 131 responses surveyed, the findings reveal important insights into the accessibility of sports facilities at their respective institutions. Specifically, 87 student-athletes—approximately 66.41%—reported using their universities' sports facilities for training. This significant majority indicates that these institutions are successfully providing environments conducive to athletic development.

Figure 20: *Where Student-Athletes Practice: Inside vs. Outside the University*



Note. This chart displays whether student-athletes train within university facilities or at external venues (N=131).

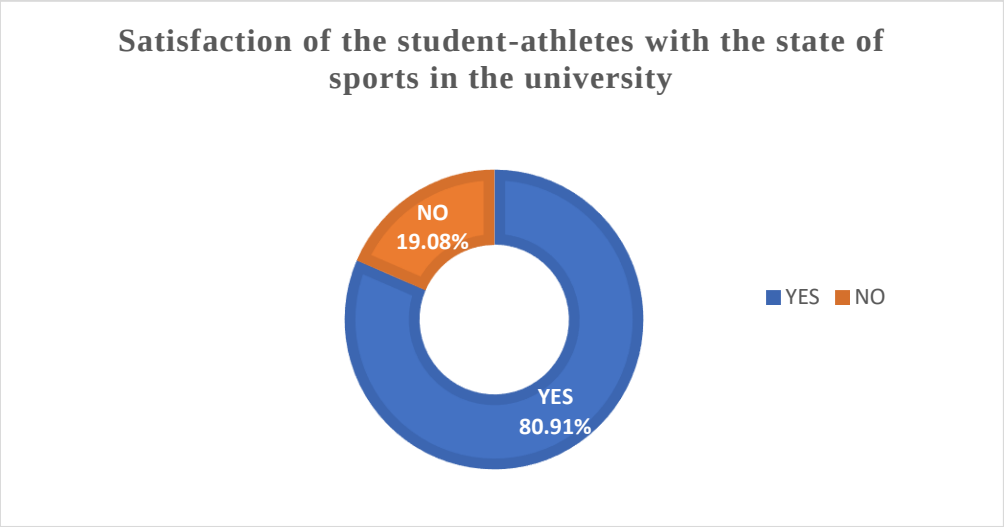
In comparison, 44 student-athletes, roughly 33.58%, reported that they train outside their universities' sports facilities. Such cases may arise due to limited facility access, schedule conflicts, or the need for specialized training environments not available at the university. Overall, the

data indicate that most student-athletes rely heavily on university facilities, though a substantial portion must seek external alternatives to meet their training needs.

1.1.9 Satisfaction with Coaching Staff and Athletic Training Services

The responses from the 131 surveyed student-athletes provide valuable insights into their satisfaction with coaching staff and athletic training services at their institutions.

Figure 21: *Student-Athlete Satisfaction With the Campus Sports Environment*



Note. This chart outlines how satisfied student-athletes feel with the overall sports culture and environment at their universities (N=131).

A substantial 106 student-athletes—about 80.91%—reported satisfaction with the coaching and training support they receive. This significant percentage shows that a large majority of these athletes feel supported and well-equipped by their coaching staff, which can be vital for their athletic growth and overall achievement. Conversely, 25 student-athletes, roughly 19.08%, expressed discontent with the coaching staff and athletic training services offered by their universities. This minority highlights potential areas for improvement, suggesting that their needs may not be fully met or that current support systems are insufficient. Overall, the data reveal a high level

of satisfaction with coaching and training services, while also underscoring the importance of addressing the concerns of dissatisfied student-athletes.

1.1.10 Reasons for Choosing the University

Selecting a university is an important decision for numerous student-athletes, as it influences their academic and athletic prospects. The questionnaire, which involved 131 student-athletes, uncovers several important factors influencing their choices.

Educational opportunities are a key factor, with 9 responses (6.87%) highlighting the significance of offered fields of study. The availability of specific sports is also significant, accounting for 15 responses (11.45%), emphasizing the importance of access to the sports they love.
The sports environment offered by the university is vital, as 16 responses (12.21%) noted that a positive environment improves their overall experience. Nevertheless, participating in local and regional competitions is of lower priority, mentioned by just 5 responses (3.81%). Financial considerations also played a role, as 11 responses (8.39%) emphasized the importance of sports scholarships. The reputation of sports at the university holds significance as well, garnering 16 responses (12.21%). The most significant factor recognized was the competence of the athletic board and coaching staff, with 30 responses (22.90%). Only 2 responses (1.52%) considered the university's location important, whereas 24 (18.32%) mentioned no specific reason for their choice. Finally, a passion for the sport itself inspired 3 responses (2.29%), reflecting the intrinsic motivation that drives many athletes. In general, the survey highlights a complex interplay of factors, with the competence of the athletic board and varsity coaching staff (22.9%) emerging as theprimary influence in university selection. Understanding these motivations can assist universities in more effectively addressing the requirements of potential student-athletes.

1.1.11 Knowledge of Differences Between Sports Models

A survey with 131 participants collected diverse viewpoints on the distinctions between the North American and French sports models. Notably, 78 participants (59.54%) omitted their responses, indicating uncertainty or unfamiliarity with the subject. Among those who provided responses, the perspectives varied greatly. Just three participants (2.29%) noted differences in training frequency and match schedules. One participant (0.76%) emphasized the significance of team ownership structures in the two sports models. Eight participants (6.10%) highlighted that the North American model emphasizes competition, scholarships, and commercialization, whereas the French model focuses on amateurism, recreation, and grassroots involvement, with less emphasis on sports scholarships. Additionally, 19 participants (14.50%) pointed out structural distinctions, indicating that the North American model operates within a closed competitive system, whereas the French model follows a pyramid structure with promotion and relegation. Moreover, two student-athletes (1.52%) responded that the North American model produces better-quality sports. There were also remarks about the quality of leagues and facilities (four responses, 3.05%) and differences in competition level and funding (five responses, 3.81%). The North American model features intense competition and significant financial backing, frequently via television deals, whereas the French model depends more on state assistance and has a distinct competitive framework. Six participants (4.58%) pointed out the sports featured in each model, observing that North American sports primarily highlight basketball and American football, whereas the French model prioritizes football, rugby, tennis, and cycling. Additionally, two participants (1.52%) noted that universities adopt specific sports models, while two others (1.52%) believed there are no significant differences between the two models. One participant (0.76%) mentioned disparities in player salaries.

In conclusion, the survey highlights a wide range of views on the North American and French sports models, focusing on major differences in competition structure, financial support, and prioritized sports, while also revealing a significant degree of uncertainty among participants.

1.2 Participants and Procedure

One hundred thirty-one student-athletes (87 males and 44 females, with an average age of 21 years) from 24 universities, all members of FSUL, participated in this questionnaire. Approval from the sports directors—and in some cases, from the heads of student affairs departments—was obtained. The student-athletes were informed of the aim of the study and gave their consent. Confidentiality regarding the collected data was maintained.

1.3 Results Obtained from the Questionnaire

Sports recognized by the FSUL for the 2023/2024 academic year: Six team sports and nine individual sports; Age category: 20 years old (27.5%); List of sports practiced by the Student-Athletes (both genders) participating in the Study: 13 types of sports; 34 student-athletes (26.35%) trained two days for three hours per week; 77.86% of student-athletes receive sports scholarships; Criteria for receiving a scholarship: specific athletic skills (27.77%) and selection in a sports team (21.29%); Main condition to maintain the scholarship: commitment of the student-athlete; 100% of universities are members of FSUL; 96.98% of universities participate in FSUL tournaments; 40.45% of universities participate in regional tournaments; 80.91% of student-athletes report their universities have sports facilities; 80.91% of student-athletes are satisfied with coaching and athletic training services provided at their university; 22.9% of student-athletes chose the university for its competent athletic board and coaching staff; In response to the question: 'What are the differences be-

tween the North American and French sports models?' 59.54% of student-athletes responded they did not know; 14.5% indicated that the North American model involves a closed competitive system, while the French model follows a pyramid structure with promotion and relegation.

Chapter 2: Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

2.1 The Results of the Questionnaire Directed to Sports Directors

2.1.1 List of Sports Directors Who Participated in the Questionnaire

A total of 21 sports directors and one head of student affairs from 22 distinct private universities in Lebanon participated in the questionnaire. The universities included are Beirut Arab University; City University; Haigazian University; Lebanese German University; Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth; Arab Open University; American University of Science and Technology; Islamic University of Lebanon; Lebanese American University (LAU Beirut); Lebanese American University (LAU Byblos); Al Maaref University; Modern University for Business and Science; Matn University College of Technology; Notre Dame University-Louaize; Rafik Hariri University; Antonine University; University of Balamand; Holy Spirit University of Kaslik; American University of Technology; Université La Sagesse; Azm University; and Arts, Sciences & Technology University in Lebanon.

Table 19: *List of University Sports Directors Participating in the Study*

University	Sports Director
1- Beirut Arab University (BAU)	Ahmad Awwas
2- City University (CityU)	Diaa Antoun
3- Haigazian University (HU)	Khatchig Seropian

4- Lebanese German University (LGU)	Wissam Saba
5- Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ)	Maroun Khoury
6- Arab Open University (AOU)	Zakaria Sharara
7- American University of Science and Technology (AUST)	Ziad Saadeh
8- Islamic University of Lebanon (IUL)	Mohamad Zreik
9- Lebanese American University (LAU Beirut)	Sami Garabedian
10- Lebanese American University (LAU Byblos)	Joe Moujaes
11- Al Maaref University (MU)	Ahmad Abbas
12- Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS)	Dima Chaaban
13- Matn University College of Technology (MUC)	Ali Fakih
14- Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU)	Elias Boutros
15- Rafik Hariri University (RHU)	Michel Abi Assal
16- Antonine University (UA)	Edgard Azzi
17- University of Balamand (UOB)	Ghaleb Halimi

18- Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)	Jenny Nassar
19- American University of Technology (AUT)	Elie Khoury
20- Université La Sagesse (ULS)	Alexy Louis
21- Azm University (AZM)	Fouad Bissar
22- Arts, Sciences & Technology University in Lebanon (AUL)	Omar Itani (Head of students-affairs in the university)

2.1.2 Number of Varsity Teams in Lebanese Universities (2023/2024 Academic Year)

For the academic year 2023/2024, all 22 universities in the Federation of Sports Universities in Lebanon (FSUL) provided valuable information on their varsity teams. This information was obtained through discussions with each institution's athletic director, providing insights into the number and diversity of varsity teams represented.

Table 20: *List of Varsity Teams and Sports Offered by 22 Lebanese Universities*

University	Number of Varsity Teams	Type of Sports
1- Beirut Arab University (BAU)	17	• Badminton (Both Genders) • Basketball (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball Juvenile (Junior) • Volleyball (Women) • Futsal (Women) • Futsal (Men) • Handball (Men) • Archery (Both Genders) • Football (Men) • Football (Juvenile)

		• Rugby (Men) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Muay Thai (Both Genders) • Taekwondo (Both Genders) • Swimming (Both Genders) • Chess (Both Genders) • Track and Field (Both Genders) • Tennis (Both Genders)
2- City University (CityU)	6	• Futsal (Men) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Chess (Both Genders) • Teqball (Both Genders)
3- Haigazian University (HU)	9	• Futsal (Men) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Chess (Both Genders) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Kickboxing (Both Genders) • Muay Thai (Both Genders)
4- Lebanese German University (LGU)	1	• Basketball (Men)
5- Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (USJ)	21	• Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Football (Men) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Handball (Men) • Handball (Women) • Swimming (Men) • Swimming (Women) • Table Tennis (Men) • Table Tennis (Women) • Tennis (Men) • Tennis (Women) • Squash (Men) • Squash (Women) • Muay Thai (Both Genders) • Taekwondo (Both Genders) • Track and Field (Both Genders)

		• Badminton (Both Genders)
6- Arab Open University (AOU)	17	• Football (Men) • Mini-Football (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Basketball 3x3 (Men) • Basketball 3x3 (Women) • Badminton • Swimming • Athletics • Table Tennis • Chess • Taekwondo • Muay Thai • Billiards • Shooting • Skiing
7- American University of Science and Technology (AUST)	10	• Football (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Handball (Men) • Table Tennis • Tennis
8-Islamic University of Lebanon (IUL)	3	• Football (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Basketball (Men) • Muay Thai (Both genders)
9-Lebanese American University (LAU Beirut)	17	• Athletics (Both Genders) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Handball (Women) • Handball (Men) • Tennis (Both Genders) • Table Tennis (Both Genders)

		• Swimming (Both Genders) • Football (Men) • Extra-curricular activities: Aerobics, Yoga, Ultimate Frisbee, Chess, Muay Thai, Cheerleading, Fitness.
10-Lebanese American University (LAU Byblos)	19	• Basketball (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Futsal (Men) • Tennis (Both Genders) • Swimming (Both Genders) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Chess (Both Genders) • Frisbee • Football (Men)
11- Al Maaref University (MU)	6	• Football (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Mini Football (Men) • Chess (Both Genders) • Muay Thai (Men) • Table Tennis (Men)
12-Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS)	0	• None
13-Matn University College of Technology (MUC)	1	• Football (Men)
14-Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU)	11	• Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Mini Football (Men) • Mini Football (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Rugby (Men) • Swimming • Table Tennis • Tennis • Chess • Badminton • Taekwondo

15-Rafik Hariri University (RHU)	3	• Basketball (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Table Tennis (Men) • Football (Men)
16-Antonine University (UA)	10	• Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Football (Men) • Badminton (Men) • Badminton (Women) • Table Tennis (Men) • Table Tennis (Women) • Track and Field (Men) • Track and Field (Women) • Swimming • Taekwondo
17-University of Balamand (UOB)	16	• Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Football (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Track and Field (Both Genders) • Tennis (Both Genders) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Swimming (Both Genders) • Badminton (Both Genders) • Handball (Men) • Rugby (Men)
18-Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)	6	• Basketball (Men) • Basketball (Women) • Volleyball (Men) • Volleyball (Women) • Futsal (Men) • Futsal (Women) • Tennis • Table Tennis • Swimming
19-American University of Technology (AUT)	4	• Basket (Men) • Futsal (Men) • Table Tennis (Both Genders)

		• Taekwondo (Both Genders) • Rugby (Men)
20-Université La Sagesse (ULS)	4	• Futsal (Men) • Table Tennis (Both Genders) • Basketball (Women) • Basketball (Men) • Badminton (Both Genders) • Muay Thai (Both Genders)
21-Azm University (AZM)	2	• Basketball • Football
22-Arts, Sciences & Technology University in Lebanon (AUL)	4	• Basketball • Football • Ping-Pong • Badminton

The universities hosting the highest number of varsity teams are Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, with 21 teams, and the Lebanese American University (Byblos), with 19 teams. In contrast, the Modern University for Business and Science (MUBS) currently has no varsity teams. This distribution highlights the varying degrees of athletic involvement across institutions in the FSUL.

2.1.3 Sports Scholarships: Criteria and Percentage Allocations

The questionnaire responses from the 22 Lebanese universities revealed a wide range of sports scholarships offered to student-athletes. Of these institutions, 18 universities offer sports scholarships, while four do not provide any athletic scholarships to their student-athletes.

Table 21: *List of the 22 Universities and Their Relation to Sports Scholarships*

University	**Availability of Sports Scholarships**	**Criteria for Presenting Sports Scholarships**	**Percentages of Sports Scholarships**
1- BAU	Yes	Athletics skills	12% till 25%

2- CITYU	Yes	---	10% till 20%
3- HU	Yes	Division 1 player/ efficient player/disciplined player	Till 25%
4- LGU	No	----	----
5- USJ	Yes	Physical and technical evaluation/academic results/attendance/team or individual results/number of games-events-years with the team	10% till 40%
6- AOU	Yes	Affiliated with top-division clubs & National teams/academic results	25% till 80%
7- AUST	Yes	Maintained a certain cumulative GPA	10% till 50%
8- IUL	Yes	First division players	30% till 100%
9- LAU Beirut	Yes	Talent/skill level/playing level (High school-club-any national team level)	10% till 25%
10- MU	Yes	----	20% till 50%
11- MUBS	Yes	Affiliation with clubs (division 1 till division 4)	40% till 65%
12- MUC	Yes	----	10% till 20%
13- NDU	Yes	Depending on the players' level	10% till 50%
14- RHU	Yes	Training commitment/affiliation with clubs (division 1 till division 5)	5% till 100%
15- UA	Yes	----	10% till 30%
16- UOB	Yes	Commitment to the varsity team/academic results/student-athletes enrolled on a full-time basis	10% till 20%
17- USEK	Yes	Coaches' assessment/general division classification/individual skills/academic results/attendance and performance	10% till 50%
18- LAU Byblos	Yes	Level of the athletes	5% till 25%
19- AUT	Yes	Performance/ attendance/ discipline	15%
20- ULS	No	----	-----
21- AZM	No	----	-----
22- AUL	No	----	-----

The criteria for granting these scholarships vary between universities. Among the 14 responses concerning scholarship eligibility, the most commonly cited factors were athletic ability and affiliation with a top-division team, both noted by six universities as key criteria. Additionally, one university requires students to maintain a specific cumulative GPA, while another prioritizes commitment to varsity teams, including participating in both practices and competitions.

An examination of the 18 Lebanese universities that offer sports scholarships revealed significant variation in the percentage provided for student-athletes, ranging from 0% to 100%. One university offers scholarships ranging from 12% to 25%, while three others offer 10% to 20%. Another reported a range of 0% to 25%, indicating minimal support, while one provides 10% to 40%. One university stands out by offering scholarships ranging from 25% to 80%, while another provides 30% to 100%, reflecting significant investment in sports. Additionally, three universities reported scholarships ranging from 10% to 50%. Others offered ranges such as 10% to 25%, 20% to 50%, and 40% to 65%. One university mentioned a broad range of 5% to 100%, while others offered 10% to 30%, 5% to 25%, and a set rate of 15%.

2.1.4 Responsible Authorities for Sports Scholarships Policies and Amounts

Responses from the 22 universities show that multiple stakeholders are involved in determining sports scholarship policies and funding levels. The Athletics Department was cited most frequently as the responsible entity, with six responses emphasizing its key role. The university administration also plays a significant role, as noted in five responses.

Table 22: *Responsible Authorities for Sports Scholarship Policies and Amounts in 22 Lebanese Universities*

University	Responsible for Policies and Amounts of Sports Scholarships
1- BAU	The administration of the university

2- CITYU	The administration of the university
3- HU	Student life technical director and the sports coordinator
4- LGU	The administration of the university
5- USJ	The Athletics Department with approval from a committee
6- AOU	The Athletics Department in collaboration with the management of the university
7- AUST	Coaches
8- IUL	The administration of the university
9- LAU Beirut	The Athletics Scholarships are part of the university's financial aid policies and are set as such by the FASO (financial Aid and Scholarships Office). The Athletics Department reviews all submitted applications, scrutinizes them carefully and calls for early try-outs, after which it decides, along with the respective coaches what the % of the Athletics scholarships should be.
10- MU	Financial Aid Department
11- MUBS	The administration of the university
12- MUC	Coaches report to the president of the university
13- NDU	It is a combination among many departments under the Student Affairs Office.
14- RHU	An athletic committee that puts all these criteria. This committee is surrounded by Doctors, professors, staff members' expertise in sports. They meet and gets approval on all the scholarship by the president of the university.
15- UA	Sports director and the Administration
16- UOB	The Office of Athletics in coordination with the Financial Aid Office
17- USEK	The Sports Department, in collaboration with Deputy President for Student Development and Enrollment Management, establishes and oversees the scholarship policies for student-athletes.
18- LAU Byblos	There is a committee consists of Financial Aid Director, Athletics Directors, and Assistant Vice President for student enrolment management.
19- AUT	Both Sports Department and Business Office
20- ULS	Dean of Students' Affairs and Finance Officer
21- AZM	It is the decision of the sports director and the president of the university.
22- AUL	Clubs provide their needs to students-affairs, and students-affairs presents it to the administration of the university.

Collaboration is common; one university described joint efforts between the technical director of student life and the sports director. Coaches (two responses) and the Student Affairs Office (two responses) also contribute to scholarship decisions. The Financial Aid Department is also involved, as indicated by one response, highlighting its role in supporting students financially. Additionally, two responses indicated that responsibilities are shared between the sports director and university administration. One university reported collaboration between the sports division and business departments. Some universities have established committees that include the Financial Aid Director and Athletics Director, or collaborations between coaches and the Student Affairs Division.

In summary, the results emphasize a collaborative structure among various departments in overseeing sports scholarships, showcasing a collective effort to effectively support student-athletes.

2.1.5 University Sports Budget: Availability and Allocation for Scholarships

Regarding sports budgeting at Lebanese universities, 19 institutions (86.36%) have implemented sports budgets, demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting athletic initiatives. Conversely, three universities (13.63%) do not have a sports budget, which restricts their ability to invest in athletics. This scenario highlights the essential role of financial support in fostering a dynamic collegiate athletic environment.

Table 23: *Overview of Sports Budgeting in the 22 Lebanese Universities*

University	Availability of Sports Budget	Budget Available for Sports Scholarships
1- BAU	Yes	There is a certain amount of % dedicated to the sports scholarships.
2- CITYU	Yes	-----

3- HU	Yes	$7,500
4- LGU	Yes	-----
5- USJ	Yes	-----
6- AOU	Yes	Sports scholarships are not part of the sports budget.
7- AUST	Yes	20% of the sports budget is directed for the sports scholarships.
8- IUL	Yes	10% of the sports budget is directed for the sports scholarships.
9- LAU Beirut	Yes	There is a defined and approved budget for the sports department and programs that is totally independent from the sports scholarships budget. The latter is defined by the FASO office.
10- MU	Yes	The sports scholarships are in a different department, not related to the sports budget.
11- MUBS	No	-----
12- MUC	Yes	-----
13- NDU	Yes	The budget cannot be determined; It is based on the enrollment of students in sports teams and individuals.
14- RHU	Yes	The sports budget does not include sports scholarships yet.
15- UA	Yes	There is no specific budget for the sports scholarships.
16- UOB	Yes	The ratio ranges from 5% to 25% of the tuition fees.
17- USEK	Yes	There is a sports budget which targets all aspects related to sports, on and off campus, including sports scholarships.
18- LAU Byblos	Yes	It is confidential.
19- AUT	Yes	For the 2023/2024 academic year, the budget was $10,000.
20- ULS	No	In the near future $20,000 for each semester.
21- AZM	Yes	It is set only for the preparation of the varsity teams for the next academic year.
22- AUL	No	-----

Regarding the funding for sports scholarships, the responses indicate a varied financial landscape among Lebanese universities. Out of 16 responses, three universities reported allocating

a specific percentage of their budget for scholarships. Additionally, three different universities reported allocating fixed amounts of $7,500, $10,000, and an estimated $20,000 in the long term.

Four universities stated that sports scholarships are not part of their total sports budget, and one reported having no dedicated scholarship budget. Some universities assign portions of their athletic budget for scholarships—one allocating 10%, and another 20%. One university noted that scholarship funding depends on student participation in sports teams, while another cited confidentiality concerns regarding budget information. One response mentioned that scholarship coverage ranges from 5% and 25% of tuition costs. Overall, the findings reflect varying degrees of commitment and integration of scholarship funding across institutions.

2.1.6 Achieving Sports Targets and Scouting High School Student-Athletes in Lebanese Universities

A total of 22 universities responded to the question whether universities require coaches and sports directors to achieve sports targets. Of these, 14 universities (63.63%) responded affirmatively, whereas 8 universities (36.36%) responded negatively.

Table 24: *University Requirements for Meeting Sports Targets and Scouting Practices for Student-Athletes*

University	University-Appointed Coaches and Sports Directors Responsible for Meeting Sports Objectives	University Scouting Activities for High School Student-Athletes
1- BAU	No	No
2- CITYU	No	Yes
3- HU	No, the main target is to see that every student is happy in the team.	Rarely
4- LGU	No	Yes
5- USJ	Yes	Yes

6- AOU	Yes	Yes (By organizing sports tournaments for the schools in the university).
7- AUST	Yes	Yes
8- IUL	No	No
9- LAU Beirut	Yes, like any other sports organization, coaches and sports directors set goals for their season and make every effort to reach and accomplish those goals and targets under the prevailing circumstances. Of course, 'winning' is the order of the day. The more teams win, the better off the entire program(s) will be. But 'universities' do not 'require' coaches/directors to meet targets but are rather encouraged to do their best in meeting those goals.	Yes, through our annual High Schools Tournament, Jr. NBA Leagues and personal scouting by respective coaches.
10- MU	No	No
11- MUBS	Yes	No (In the process of organizing it).
12- MUC	Yes	No
13- NDU	Sports at NDU were revived since last year, we are targeting to be among the top three universities in Lebanon.	Yes, we started a scouting program last year and we are organizing interschool tournaments since 2007.
14- RHU	For now, we are in rebuilding mode and recruiting players, because COVID-19 and the financial crisis and changing sports directors disrupted the athletic department. So for basketball we have a target to remain between top eight university ranking. As for football and futsal, we're rebuilding the teams and trying to develop current players.	Yes
15- UA	No	Some coaches do
16- UOB	Yes, they need to reflect a positive image about the university by achieving good results in local and international competitions.	No, we used to organize a school sports tournament in many sports for neighboring schools.
17- USEK	Like other universities, achieving a commendable ranking is important for our institution. However, our primary focus lies in imparting values such as sportsmanship and fostering the acqui-	No

	sition of new skills to our student-athletes, which we consider paramount on and off the field.	
18- LAU Byblos	Target is set, that has several criteria and not only results driven.	Yes
19- AUT	Yes, the coaches must meet a specific standard during the season, as for myself, I am required to reach the highest ranking possible considering the renovation phase the Sports Department is undergoing.	Yes
20- ULS	Yes	No
21- AZM	No, the first target is to participate in the university league next academic year.	Yes, we started scouting players in the surrounding schools and clubs in north Lebanon.
22- AUL	Yes, as a first step to build the sports teams.	Yes

Regarding whether universities scout student-athletes during high school, 14 universities (63.63%) responded positively, while 8 colleges (36.36%) responded negatively.

The survey also explored whether providing sports scholarships contributes to improving the quality of sports in Lebanon. Of the 22 responses, 20 sports directors (90.9%) believed that scholarships will boost sports in Lebanon, whereas 2 sports directors (9.09%) did not.

2.1.7 Rating the Level of University Sports Competitions in Lebanon and Identifying Areas for Development

A survey question assessed the level of university competitions in Lebanon, based on feedback from 18 sports directors. The responses depicted a diverse picture of the current state of FSUL competitions. One participant rated the level as low, another as very average, and three as average. Three others gave a more positive assessment, rating it as good.

Table 25: *Sports directors' Ratings of Lebanese University Sports Leagues and Suggested Areas for Improvement*

University	Rating the Level of the University Sports Competitions in Lebanon	Can the Universities' Competitions Be Improved? If Yes, How?	Aspects of Development in University Sports in Lebanon
1- BAU	Weak level	Management and organization should be improved.	The federation should organize tournaments better to move toward professionalism.
2- CITYU	Average level	Performance-wise improvements are needed.	-To improve universities' sports performance, increasing their chances to represent Lebanon. -Coaches should attend training workshops and obtain certifications to enhance their level.
3- HU	Good level	It can be improved.	It is on the right track and gradually improving.
4- LGU	High level	The federation (FSUL) should adopt better tournament organization methods.	A new league system/format should be introduced to increase competitiveness and enhance players' performance.
5- USJ	Very good level	Yes	Collaboration with federations, clubs, and schools.
6- AOU	Good level	Organization can be improved, especially since only three federation members are responsible for organizing tournaments.	Better preparation of university national teams for the Universiade, as it directly impacts local university competitions.
7- AUST	Very good level	Yes	To establish better competitions between the universities.

8- IUL	Average level	The Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the University Federation, should support universities by providing necessary facilities and revising aspects of the tournament system.	-The federation should support university sports departments. -Registration fees for universities participating in FSUL tournaments should be reduced.
9- LAU Beirut	Over the past decade the level of players and competition has improved tremendously and it has become more intense and competitive and has created a true spirit of pride and belonging. This status is probably due to the fact that most university teams have players who also play at clubs and on national teams.	Yes	-There is a lack of adequate facilities; universities should make a collective effort to improve them. -Participating universities, especially newer ones, should be more transparent and adhere to regulations. -Increased financial support from the government is needed to sustain and develop university sports.
10- MU	Very good level	Yes, by improving the tournament format.	-Better refereeing. -Courts should be located at neutral venues between universities.
11- MUBS	No answer	No answer	No answer
12- MUC	Very good level	Yes, the federation should play a more active role.	Stronger federation involvement.

13- NDU	We have been at a critical level since COVID-19. Some Universities resumed sports activities earlier than others, but it seems that this year we will have improve.	Yes	- Increase competitions and international participation. -Coaches should obtain advanced diplomas to enhance sports mentality. -Expand recreational sports activities to reach a wider range of students and promote a healthy environment, rather than focusing only on competitive sports.
14- RHU	-I think the level is better than that of some divisions in Lebanon due to better players, coaches, and schedules. This year, thecompetition is higher due to the new league format in the playoffs rounds.	It can improve if universities take sports more seriously. The league should include live coverage, statistics, and better rewards. Increased monitoring by the federation is also necessary (IDs, coaches, players, referees). Misconduct should be penalized.	- More valuable prizes (financial rewards, travel opportunities, etc.), not just cups and medals. -Better game supervision through trained staff or volunteers. -Live coverage to enhance engagement. -Statistical tracking to monitor progress. -All-Star games and side competitions.
15- UA	No answer	It can be improved with better organization and professionalism.	Establish bylaws to ensure professional competitions.
16- UOB	No answer	Yes, by building adequate facilities, hiring qualified coaches and administrators, and establishing a high-standard federation to manage university sports in Lebanon.	Teaching the fundamentals and principles of sport management.

17- USEK	Commendable level	There is significant room for improvement by implementing a consistent and flexible schedule that accommodates all universities. Training programs, trips, and boot camps can also enhance skills and teamwork across universities.	-Improve coaching and training programs to provide high-quality guidance. -Establish more leagues to ensure continuity and provide athletes with regular opportunities to compete.
18- LAU Byblos	The level has dropped after COVID-19 pandemic.	Yes, it can be significantly improved.	Set clear calendars, create different conferences, and categorize universities by level.
19- AUT	Very average level	Improvements can be achieved by strictly following the schedule set by FSUL at the beginning of the competition.	No answer
20- ULS	Good level	It can be improved through better social media coverage.	Providing each university with its own courts would facilitate better and easier development.
21- AZM	The present university league does not motivate medium and small university to participate, since it combines all universities in one league.	Introduce League A and League B to better accommodate universities of different levels.	University sports are part of a larger system that includes academies, schools, and division leagues. Better coordination among these sectors will significantly improve sports across Lebanon.
22- AUL	No Answer	Yes, by introducing TV broadcasting.	Attract more sponsors to the sector.

Four participants rated the competition as very good, with one calling it commendable. However, concerns were also raised: one respondent noted a lack of enthusiasm, and two indicated that competitive intensity has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. On the positive side, one

participant observed a notable increase in player intensity and competitiveness, while another claimed that the competition level exceeds that of certain league divisions in Lebanon. These responses reflect a complex but evolving university sports environment, marked by both challenges and improvements. Another survey question asked whether university competitions could be improved. All 21 respondents (100%) agreed that there is significant room for improvement. This unanimous consensus reflects a strong collective desire to enhance university athletics. The survey also gathered suggestions for improving university competitions, receiving 15 responses. Four participants highlighted the need for better management and organization by the FSUL. One participant highlighted the importance of raising varsity team performance standards, while another called for more support from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, and the university federation.

Two participants proposed improving the competition format, and one suggested that the FSUL should take a more proactive role. Additionally, three participants recommended live broadcasting of events to increase engagement. One participant proposed the creation of a top-tier federation dedicated to university sports. Others emphasized the need for a flexible and reliable schedule that accommodates all universities, along with strict adherence to the FSUL calendar. These responses collectively underscore strong interest in improving the standards and structure of university competitions. The survey also explored broader areas for improvement in Lebanese university sports, gathering 20 responses. Two participants emphasized the need for better tournament organization by the FSUL, while two others stressed raising performance standards from the universities. One participant believed university sports are progressing in the right direction. Two participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between federations, clubs, and schools. One suggested better preparation for the Universiade, and another called for more FSUL support

for university sports departments. Other recommendations included increased government financial support, better refereeing and enforcement of rules, and encouraging participation in both local and international competitions. Additional suggestions involved developing bylaws to support professional pathways, promoting sports management education, and implementing training programs for coaches and athletes. One participant proposed classifying universities by level for more accurate evaluation, while another participant recommended attracting more sponsors. Lastly, one participant emphasized that each university should have its own sports facilities to support athletic programs. Overall, these findings indicate a strong desire to improve the infrastructure and effectiveness of university sports in Lebanon.

2.1.8 Number of Training Sessions for Student-Athletes in Varsity Teams and with Clubs

The survey also examined the frequency of training sessions attended by student-athletes with their university varsity teams, based on 20 responses. According to the sports directors, varsity team sessions typically range from one hour and thirty minutes to two hours. The findings revealed a diverse range of training programs across institutions. Two universities reported holding one session per week, while four universities held between one and two sessions per week. The most common response came from nine universities, which conducted two sessions weekly. One university stated that it organized two to three sessions, while three universities reported holding three sessions each week. Finally, one university noted that it conducted three to four sessions weekly. This variation in training schedules illustrates the differing strategies adopted by universities to support their varsity teams and enhance athletic performance.

Table 26: *Training Frequency (Varsity vs. Club) and Financial Status of Surveyed Student-Athletes*

University	Training Sessions with the Varsity Teams in the University	Student-Athletes Train Outside the University with National Top-Division Clubs	Number of Sessions the Student-Athletes Train with Their Clubs (Outside the University)	Are the Student-Athletes Getting Paid with Their Clubs
1- BAU	3 sessions per week/ each session 1 hour and 30 minutes (1h30mins)	Yes	5 days per week	Yes
2- CITYU	3 sessions per week/ each session 1h30mins	Yes	3 sessions per week	Yes
3- HU	-Team training: 2 sessions per week -Individual training: ex: muay thai- chess- kick boxing: 1 session per week	Yes	4 sessions per week	Yes
4- LGU	2 days per week 1h 30mins per session	Yes	5 days per week: 1st division player	No information is available on whether they receive financial support
5- USJ	3 to 4 session per week	Yes, some players	2 to 3 times per week	Yes
6- AOU	2 sessions per week	Yes	5 days	Yes (especially 1st division players)
7- AUST	2 sessions per week	Yes	4-5 days per week	Yes
8- IUL	1 session per week	Yes	3 to 5 days per week	Yes

9- LAU Beirut	2 sessions per week (depending on the sports)	Yes	No idea	No information is available on whether they receive financial support
10- MU	2 days per week 1h 30mins per session	Yes	2-3 days per week	Yes
11- MUBS	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer
12- MUC	2 days per week 1h 30mins per session	No	--	--
13- NDU	2 sessions per week	Yes	4 to 5 sessions per week	Yes
14- RHU	1 to 2 sessions per week (depending on the sports)	Yes	3-4-5 sessions per week (depending on the division)	Yes
15- UA	1 to 2 sessions per week (depending on the sports)	Yes	Depends on the type of sports	Yes
16- UOB	3 sessions per week	Yes	--	Yes
17- USEK	1 to 2 sessions per week	Yes	Daily training	Yes
18- LAU Byblos	2 to 3 sessions per week	Yes	--	Yes
19- AUT	2 sessions per week	Yes	2 sessions per week	Yes
20- ULS	----	Yes	2-3 sessions per week	Yes
21- AZM	1 session per week per team	Yes	-----	----
22- AUL	For basketball and football: 2 sessions per week (2 hours). For badminton and table tennis (5 days per week)	Yes	5 days per week	No information is available on whether they receive financial support

Another question aimed to determine whether student-athletes train with national top-division clubs outside of their university setting. Of 21 universities that responded, 20 reported that their student-athletes do participate in training sessions with such clubs, while only one university indicated that their athletes do not. To assess how many sessions student-athletes attend with these external clubs, 15 responses were analyzed. One response mentioned two sessions per week, three responses indicated two to three sessions, and one response reported three sessions weekly. Two responses referred to three to five sessions per week, while one respondent noted four sessions weekly. Two additional responses mentioned four to five weekly sessions, and five participants confirmed that their student-athletes train five times per week with their respective clubs.

To better understand the financial situation of these student-athletes, a follow-up question addressed whether they receive compensation for their participation in top-division clubs. Out of 19 responses, 16 indicated that the student-athletes do get paid by their clubs, while three respondents expressed uncertainty regarding this matter.

2.1.9 Availability of Sports Facilities in Universities

In order to assess the accessibility of sports facilities in Lebanese universities, the survey included a question on this topic, which received 21 responses. Six sports directors stated that their universities rent sports facilities off-campus due to the lack of adequate resources on-site.

Table 27: *Sports Facilities in Lebanese Universities*

University	The university possesses sports facilities, rents facilities for specific sports, or both
1- BAU	Sports facilities in the university
2- CITYU	Sports facilities in the university
3- HU	Rent
4- LGU	Rent

5- USJ	Both
6- AOU	Rent
7- AUST	Both
8- IUL	Sports facilities in the university
9- LAU Beirut	Both
10- MU	Rent
11- MUBS	---
12- MUC	Rent
13- NDU	Both
14- RHU	Both
15- UA	Both
16- UOB	Both
17- USEK	Both
18- LAU BYBLOS	Rent
19- AUT	Both
20- ULS	Both
21- AZM	Sports facilities in the university
22- AUL	Sports facilities in the university

In contrast, five participants indicated that their universities possess on-campus sports facilities that are available for varsity teams. Notably, ten universities reported using a combination of their own facilities and rented ones, indicating a hybrid strategy to meet the training and competition needs of their varsity teams.

2.1.10 Importance of Sports in the Sports Directors' Universities

This section explores the perceived importance of university sports as seen by the sports directors who participated in the questionnaire. Every director offered unique insights into the role of athletics in student development, university engagement, and promoting overall student involvement. The directors emphasized that strong athletic programs can contribute significantly to a university's reputation, enhance school pride, and promote inclusivity for students with diverse interests. Sports were also highlighted as tools for strengthening community engagement and aligning with broader institutional missions. The analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of how

athletics contributes to the overall student experience and supports the strategic goals of higher education institutions.

Table 28: *Importance of Sports in the 22 Lebanese Universities*

University	Importance of Sports in the University
1- BAU	• Important vision set by the university to ensure professionalism in the sports sector. • The university presents sports scholarships to the players to make them improve in sports.
2-CITYU	• Sports is a good marketing tool for the university. • Healthy lifestyle for the students.
3- HU	• Sports in HU university make the student more connected to our university activities, by becoming interested in game schedules and even outside his/her courses.
4- LGU	• Currently, sports is regarded as a luxury in the university • In recent times, when there is an economic crisis education becomes prioritized above sports.
5- USJ	• Students who play sports have higher GPAs than those who do not.
6- AOU	• Sports at the university are of great importance, as they provide a haven for students to relieve academic pressure and strengthen their relationship with the university. • Sports are one of the most important marketing platforms for the university. At my university, they have helped reach a large segment of society through various activities (social, humanitarian, honoring, etc.). • Sports are among the most important attractions for high school students, and university competitions have become a major factor in differentiating between universities.
7- AUST	• Better relationships among student-athletes. • A stronger sense of belonging to the university. • Improvement in students' physical and mental health.
8- IUL	• The success of university sports teams directly affects the institution's reputation and prestige.
9-LAU Beirut	• Important
10- MU	• A larger budget allocated for sports. • Better engagement with other universities.
11- MUBS	• ----
12-MUC	• Very important for youth in universities. • Better health and routine for players.

13-NDU	• Sports activities are one of the most important aspects of student life during the academic year. • NDU aims to achieve a higher level and expand its sports activities as part of its future plans. • NDU sports teams are well prepared and supported by a qualified Sports Administration, along with continuous support for trainers. All of this is overseen by the Student Affairs Office.
14-RHU	• For me, sport is very important. It is not only about competing and winning for my student-athletes. When I first arrived, it was a disaster—everyone wanted to fight in every game, and there was no discipline. Through proper guidance, I helped them understand situations better, become more disciplined, and control their actions. This development also reflects positively off the court. • For me, winning is not the main priority. I understand the capabilities of my region; what matters is that students learn sportsmanship and how to compete properly. • Through sports and education, we can develop a better version of each student for the future.
15-UA	• Exposure for student-athletes. • Encouraging interest in sports instead of negative activities. • Helping to improve the educational level. • Exposure for universities.
16-UOB	• The Sports Program at our university is very important, and the administration encourages its progress and development.
17-USEK	• The Sports Department at USEK provides an inclusive and engaging program that fosters physical wellness, sportsmanship, teamwork, and leadership skills, while upholding institutional values and contributing to the well-being of the community. Through diverse sports offerings, it aims to cultivate lifelong physical activity, promote fair play, and develop well-rounded individuals who excel both on and off the field.
18-LAU Byblos	• It prepares students to manage themselves after graduation, function under stress, make decisions, communicate effectively with peers, and become role models in their environment.
19-AUT	• Sports play a crucial role in universities by promoting physical fitness, fostering teamwork, and enhancing overall well-being. They also contribute to a sense of community and provide opportunities for skill development and leadership.
20-ULS	• Sports in universities are vital for fostering physical well-being, teamwork, and a sense of community among students.
21-AZM	• Based on our new management plan, we are working to improve sports teams on campus. Students are eager to play and participate in tournaments.
22-AUL	• Sports hold importance equal to education within the university.

This investigation also focused on universities that are members of FSUL for the 2023/2024 academic year but chose not to participate in that year's competitions. These universities include MUC, MUBS, AUL, LU, and AZM. MUC announced that they would not take part due to the newly formed men's football team, which is still undergoing development. Simirlarly, MUBS explained that their Sports Department had been inactive in recent years due to the pandemic, and that their current efforts are focused on revitalizing internal teams and rebuilding the department. AZM noted that a unified league structure does not motivate small or medium-sized universities to participate. AUL attributed their absence to the lasting impact of COVID-19, during which education remained online for three years. With the return of on-campus learning, their focus has shifted to reviving their athletic teams for future engagement.

Finally, LU confirmed their inactivity for the 2023/2024 academic year. These responses reveal the various challenges and institutional decisions that have shaped university sports participation in the post-pandemic context.

2.2 Results Obtained from the Questionnaire

A total of 22 individuals participated in the questionnaire, including 21 sports directors and one head of student affairs. Among the universities presented, 18 (81.81%) offer sports scholarships, while four (18.18%) do not. The main criteria for awarding scholarships include athletic skills and affiliation top-division clubs, both cited by 42.85% of respondents. The percentage of scholarships offered to student-athletes varies, with 16.66% of universities offering between 10% and 20%, and another 16.66% offering between 10% and 50%. Responsibility for setting scholarship policies and amounts lies primarily with the university administration (22.72%) and the Athletics Department (27.27%). Regarding financial resources, 19 universities (86.36%) have a dedicated sports budget, while three (13.63%) do

not. Among those that have a budget, four universities (25%) reported that sports scholarships are not included in it. Fourteen universities (63.63%) require coaches and sports directors to meet specific performance targets, while eight universities (36.36%) do not. Similarly, fourteen universities (63.63%) actively scout student-athletes in high schools for recruitment purposes, whereas eight universities (36.36%) do not engage in such practices. When asked about the effectiveness of sports scholarships in improving the level of sports in Lebanon, 20 sports directors (90.9%) agreed that scholarships have a positive impact, while two sports directors (9.09%) disagreed. As for the overall level of university sports competitions in Lebanon, three respondents (16.66%) described the level as average, three (16.66%) rated it as good, and four (22.22%) considered it very good. However, all 21 respondents (100%) agreed that university competitions can be improved. Suggested improvements include better management and organization of competitions by FSUL (26.66%) and the introduction of live coverage for FSUL competitions (20%). Additional areas for development include improved oversight of FSUL tournament—particularly regarding officiating and rule transparency—and stronger collaboration between FSUL and national federations, clubs, and schools. In terms of training frequency, the majority of universities (45%) reported organizing two training sessions per week for their sports teams. Furthermore, 95.23% of universities have student-athletes that train with national top-division clubs, and 33.33% of them train five times per week. A significant number of these student-athletes—84.21%—also receive compensation from their clubs. Regarding sports infrastructure, 28.57% of universities rent facilities, 23.80% have on-campus sports infrastructure, and 47.61% adopt a combined strategy by using both university-owned and rented facilities.

Chapter 3: Placement of the Lebanese Universities Sports Model Between the French and U.S. University Sports Models

This section analyzes the elite sports models in the United States, France, and Lebanon, highlighting the unique approaches and systems employed by each country. It will also investigate the crucial roles that universities play in promoting sports, with a focus on the connection between universities and elite sports models in each nation. Furthermore, this section aims to compare the sports model of Lebanese universities with those of France and the U.S.

Beginning with the elite sports models in France, it is crucial to analyze how the nation's organized system affects the growth of sports and the role of universities within this framework. In France, the access route system for elite sports includes structures that create favorable conditions for the advancement of high-level athletes in both academics and athletic careers. In secondary education, this system is applied in various ways: athletes may receive exemptions on their report cards, local educational authorities can allocate additional hours to schools, an academic year may sometimes be extended, and the weekly timetable can be adjusted to accommodate athletes' sports commitments. Decree No. 2002-1010, dated July 18, 2002, specifies that access paths for high-level sports include facilities designed to help elite and promising athletes attain the highest standards in their sporting discipline and receive training that prepares them for a professional sports career. These programs mainly consist of two categories: one for promising gifted athletes and another for seasoned professionals ('pôles Espoirs' and 'pôles France'). These are structured as networks within each sports category and are designed to provide training for athletes while serving as resource centers that offer various support services, particularly in careers and medical assistance. The groups must meet specific criteria to ensure athletes receive optimal conditions for training and assistance across various areas of their lives. These requirements are developed based

on the recommendations of a national technical director, in collaboration with the relevant sports federation, and incorporate provisions agreed upon by the Minister for Sport, the Minister for Youth, the Minister for National Education and Research, and the Minister for Agriculture (Stagiaire & Winther, 2003).

The Ministry of Youth, National Education, and Research is responsible for decisions related to higher education. Regulations regarding the enrollment of elite athletes in higher education institutions are outlined in Circular No. 1455, dated October 6, 1987. This circular urges university deans, school heads, and regional education directors to make every effort to support elite athletes wishing to balance their athletic pursuits with academic studies. Due to the decentralized nature of university management, some university deans can, under certain circumstances, implement special provisions for elite athletes. These arrangements typically involve extending course durations, permitting reduced attendance at lectures, and postponing exams. For example, each year, the Ministry of Health grants exemptions to 20 elite athletes'exemptions from entrance exams for the first year of physiotherapy and chiropody courses at institutes (Stagiaire & Winther, 2003).

In France, data from the Athens Olympic Games are comparable to that of the UK. Bayle et al. (2008) noted that 21 out of 41 medalists were student-athletes affiliated with the National Institute of Sport and Physical Education (INSEP). Consequently, the authors argued that the elite training center is regarded as a remarkably successful program, continually producing outstanding athletes who have helped France secure a top 10 position globally in both the Olympic Games and World Championships. The French government oversees five national sports institutes to support elite athletes, specifically: INSEP; the National School of Ski and Mountaineering; the National School of Sailing; the National Equestrian School (ENE); and the National School of Cross-Country Skiing and Ski Jumping. INSEP is a governmental institute managed by the Ministry of Sport

and was established in 1945. Its goal is to help elite athletes balance rigorous training with academic education. INSEP can accommodate up to 1,000 athletes selected by their respective sports associations. Typically, the National Technical Director of the sports federation is responsible for recommending several promising athletes for selection and entry into INSEP. Athletes admitted to INSEP must pay a fee to cover training and lodging costs, typically funded by their club, sports federation, or sponsor. Within the INSEP system, educators visit the sports facility to teach the student-athletes, and the classes at INSEP are typically smaller, averaging about 15 students each, to foster a better learning environment for the athletes. Additionally, INSEP provides the assistance of an education adviser and coordinator for student-athletes who encounter challenges with their study programs or have missed classes due to training or competition commitments.

It is essential to focus on the involvement of universities in sports, especially considering the contributions made by the FFSU. Historically, before 1978, school and university sports were managed by a single structure called the Association du Sport Scolaire et Universitaire (ASSU). In this context, head of the high school, the director of the college, and the president of the university were by law presidents of the sports association, which gave this organization a special legal regime. In 1978, it was decided to separate school sports from university spots. This is how the FFSU was created (Auneau & Diagana, 2008). A Decree of March 13, 1986, conferred on this federation specific competencies to 'promote and organize the practice of amateur sports competition for university students and students of higher education institutions as well as for students in classes after the Bachelor's degree'. Unlike other sports federations, FFSU is primarily managed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. However, as stated in Article 16 of the amended Law of July 16, 1984, on the organization and promotion of physical and sporting activities, 'the

Minister of Sports shall participate in the definition and implementation of the objectives of this federation'.

The evolution of practices over the last few years has led to the development of three types of physical and sports activities:

-Competitive sports practices at all levels in conjunction with the French Federation of University Sports (FFSU).

-High-level sports practices which, in some universities, have been the subject of specific treatment, but the FFSU remains the main coordinating body.

Elite sports within a dual-career structure necessitate a centralized venue where athletes can access athletic, educational, and healthcare amenities. This venue must also provide a range of talented experts (including coaching, teaching, administrative, and medical staff) as well as residential areas (housing, dining facilities, relaxation zones, office spaces, etc.). Simultaneously, the university must offer numerous resources and facilities to its students and teaching staff, albeit with differing requirements (Auneau & Diagana, 2008).

-Physical and sports practices for all audiences called Activités Physiques, Sportives et Artistiques (APSA) which covers all other forms of activities whose primary objective is not performance but which may address concerns related to physical maintenance, well-being, and overall health (Auneau & Diagana, 2008).

Like any sports federation, this organization operates with a General Assembly that elects a steering committee and a chairman every four years; the steering board designates its executive office. It adopts its own statutes based on model statutes imposed by the Secretary of State for

Sports. The Federation has established Comités Régionaux du Sport Universitaire (CRSU) to represent the federation at the local level (Auneau & Diagana, 2008).

In summary, regarding the role of French universities in elite sport, French universities are playing an increasingly significant role in the development of elite sports by implementing dual-career routes that aim to balance academic excellence with high-level athletic performance. At the heart of this framework is the partnership between higher education institutions and national sports organizations like the National Institute of Sport and Physical Education (INSEP), which offers centralized training and performance assistance for top athletes. Inside universities, the autonomy of institutions allows administrative entities and some deans to implement particular measures designed to meet the requirements of student-athletes, such as adaptable scheduling, personalized academic guidance, and access to specialized resources. Also, the FFSU is essential in nurturing a culture of university sports, encouraging competition among universities, and backing efforts to integrate sports more thoroughly into the academic setting. Together, these initiatives represent a wider national approach focused on weaving elite athletic growth into the core of higher education. Although French universities assist student-athletes in balancing their dual careers, this academic support does not represent a significant position in the competitive sports system.

In fact, educational institutions in Europe, such as schools and universities, primarily focus on teaching, including physical education, while sports associations offer opportunities to engage in sports at various levels (Wilson, 1994). In Europe, sports never became part of universities, which were regarded as research centers, preparation sites for government officials, or institutions associated with the church. In each of the three instances, they stayed firmly within the domain of thought and exhibited minimal, if any, acceptance of physical activities (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001).

Regarding the National Association of Professional Sports Leagues in France, which includes the national basketball, football, handball, rugby, and volleyball leagues and brings together 170 professional clubs, it notes that relationships between professional team sports clubs (basketball, football, handball, rugby, volleyball) and universities are highly dependent on individual decisions. This situation prevents athletes from choosing a higher education program based on their personal preferences; this choice is instead determined by local offerings (Auneau & Diagana, 2008). This challenge is further complicated for university leadership by the reality that student involvement in sports is still quite low. For example, 36% of students in the Île-de-France region participate in sports, including only 8% at university. No university in Paris has its own sports facilities, except for of Paris VI and Paris IX. Finally, even if the social context favors the development of physical and sporting practices, these are still too often considered by the main political actors of the university as cultural activities. Field actors such as certain SUAPS (Service Universitaire d'Activités Physiques et Sportives) and certain student organizations share this orientation (Auneau & Diagana, 2008).

Additionally, this paragraph analyzes the media coverage of university sports events in France. Although the FFSU's official website offers updates such as results, photos, and internal news, it does not feature substantial media coverage or national broadcasts. There are no collaborations with significant national platforms such as L'Équipe or France Télévisions, which emphasize the limited exposure of university sports in the wider media environment. Despite the FFSU operating a YouTube channel and utilizing social media to share content, these initiatives are still quite limited and mainly aimed at an internal audience. The lack of wider media involvement highlights the peripheral role of university competitions within France's national sports framework.

After inspecting the elite sports model in France, the focus will shift to the elite sports models in the United States, with an examination of the impact of universities in sports, particularly through the draft system. This section also aims to outline the key features of sports in American universities. For the North American sports model, taking the example of the U.S.: The U.S. has a rich sports background that has resulted in the production of many talented athletes, and operates within a remarkable and unique sports governance system. U.S. sports consist of four sectors: community, Olympic and Paralympic, university and schools, and the last is professional. At higher levels, the sports governance system becomes increasingly professionalized and varies depending on these four sectors (Prakash et al., 2021)

Community sport is the first sector in the U.S. sport system. It consists of grassroots sport, whose main goal is to develop sports through players' and infrastructure growth. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the National Junior College Athletics Association (NJCAA) form the second subsector of U.S. sport, which is intercollegiate sector. The NCAA is the country's most influential intercollegiate non-profit sport governing body. The Olympic system, which is governed globally by The International Olympic Committee (IOC), is the third subsector of American sports. Since the U.S. does not have a Ministry of Sports, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) operates independently of the federal government and contributes heavily to managing Olympic and Paralympic sports. Lastly, the fourth sub-sector in American sports is professional sports, which consists of private leagues dominated by the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and Major League Soccer (MLS). Since the government does not play a significant role and entrepreneurs manage their teams and

leagues in compliance with U.S. business regulations, private organizations create their own rules and methods of governance. As a demonstration: The five categories that make up USA Basketball's membership structure are professional, college, scholastic, youth, and associate. A twelve-member board of directors oversees these five divisions as well as USA Basketball as an organization (Prakash et al., 2021).

Associations such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Hockey League (NHL) are not worldwide governing institutions for their specific sports but are more influential than their corresponding: The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) (Forster, 2006). The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic pursue a structure of governance that is organized by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC), and evolved by the National Sports Federations (NSFs) and their associates. These two associations, USOPC and NSF, are non-profit, non-governmental organizations that do not receive funds from the U.S. government, excluding some financial support granted for military programs in the Paralympic games (Prakash et al., 2021).

Student-athletes need to excel and demonstrate solid performances in high school in their sport prior to being recruited, particularly at NCAA Division I schools, and are required to try out through performance in games and camps. Universities seek the top candidates and offer scholarships. Certain gifted candidates are accepted even when their GPA and SAT results fall below the range of the overall student population. Student-athletes train individually and as part of teams, compete on weekends or evenings throughout the semester, and travel to locations outside the campus. Their matches offer enjoyment to the college community, and tickets usually need to be bought. While there are exceptional athletic talents, the majority of them attend college. Only a small number of college athletes turn pro in their respective sports. In Division I men's basketball,

for instance, fewer than half of 1% of Division I scholarship athletes annually get the chance to compete in the professional National Basketball Association (NBA), and most of those have brief careers (Brand, 2006).

In the United States, high schools, colleges, and universities play a significant role in the growth of amateur sports, particularly in sports that do not take place during the winter (Ridpath et al., 2019). While there are alternative paths for elite development at a pre-professional and/or amateur level in the United States, the education system accounts for nearly 80% of elite sport progression in non-winter sports (Ridpath et al., 2019). Multiple governing entities oversee college athletics in the U.S. The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the NCAA are the three principal organizations that regulate college sports (Gems & Pfister, 2009), with the NCAA as the largest and main governing body. The NCAA establishes, publishes, and enforces the regulations for athletic participation just like the other organizations. It organizes national championship competitions and keeps the statistical records of college sports performances. The NCAA identifies itself as a nonprofit entity but generates substantial income, primarily from television and sponsorship earnings generated by its highly successful annual men's basketball championship tournament. Revenue is shared among NCAA members across the three distinct competitive divisions (Hums & MacLean, 2004).

Since 1973, the NCAA has been divided into three Divisions (I, II, III) based on the school's size or its focus on sports and ideology, aiming to create balanced competition. Moreover, Division I is further divided into three sub-divisions according to the scale of their sports programs. Typically, Division I institutions allocate substantial resources to their sports programs to boost competitiveness and income production. Division I schools generate most of their income from

ticket sales, sponsorships, and broadcasting deals (Gems & Pfister, 2009). The NAIA consists predominantly of smaller institutions (Hums & MacLean, 2004). The NAIA aims to enhance the overall college educational experience and seeks to establish an appropriate balance between the managed programs and championships. It comprises over 300 members distributed across fourteen regions (Hums & MacLean, 2004). Junior colleges in the NJCAA provide two-year associate degrees in general higher education. Associate degrees can often be transferred to universities or colleges for the achievement of bachelor's degrees. The NJCAA consists of around 300 members grouped into 26 regions. For those athletes whose test results or high school GPAs fall short for standard university or college admissions, junior colleges offer the opportunity to enhance academic performance and possibly earn a scholarship at more prominent institutions, usually NCAA Division I & II (Gems & Pfister, 2009).

The draft system in American universities is a distinctive aspect of the North American model that warrants closer examination. It is not surprising that access to resources (funds, coaches, training facilities, and playing conditions) can lead to financial inequalities for teams when attempting to choose athletes. At the professional level, teams that have bigger budgets can provide higher salaries to more in-demand athletes, frequently resulting in inequality among teams in the league. To address some of these inequalities, the 'amateur entry draft' (commonly referred to as the 'draft') was established. In North America, it was first implemented in the sport of football within the National Football League (NFL) in 1936 to stop teams from amassing 'excessive talent'. The draft system aims to provide weaker teams with a better opportunity to develop their programs, to discourage expensive bidding contests for skilled young athletes, and assists in reducing the likelihood that one team would dominate the top young players (Johnston et al., 2022).

At present, numerous professional sports leagues (for both men and women) conduct entry drafts in various countries. The most recognized sports in the U.S. featuring drafts are Major League Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL), and National Hockey League (NHL). These leagues operate under collective bargaining agreements that govern athlete recruitment and development practices. Unlike European soccer leagues, leagues like MLB, the NBA, NFL, and NHL cannot acquire players through academies or by purchasing their rights in the transfer market. Instead, athletes are selected only after they meet the minimum age criteria specific to the league and are invited to become part of a team via the entry draft process. In the draft, teams alternate choosing (drafting) their upcoming players in a set order typically determined by last year's performance standings (for instance, the team that finishes last gets the first selection, the second-to-last team gets the second pick, and so forth). Once the team with the best record picks an athlete, the 'first round' of the draft concludes, and the procedure is repeated until the preset number of rounds (defined by the league and the year) is reached. The process of selecting a player signifies that the team obtains the rights to offer that athlete a professional contract (Johnston et al., 2022).

Following the examination of elite sports in the U.S., it is important to assess the significant role colleges play in maintaining and providing for this system. Firstly, it is vital to examine how college athletics produce substantial income, especially through television contracts that benefit both the NCAA and universities. Referring to the historical context of the early 2000s, particularly 2001, the NCAA and the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) entered into an 11-year deal that provided rights to twenty-one championships until the conclusion of the 2013 season. The NCAA noted that ESPN plans to broaden its coverage of tournament games and offer an improved promotional package for NCAA and college athletics, featuring eight highlight

shows. Furthermore, an annual promotional campaign would take place from November to March on ESPN (Cooprider, 2008).

Continuing in 2002, the NCAA struck a deal with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) for exclusive television rights to the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship, along with other championship events and marketing prospects linked to all NCAA championships. The 11-year contract, worth at least $6 billion (approximately £3.25 billion), starts with the 2002–2003 school year. The contract amounted to an average of $545 million (approximately £297 million) annually and includes financial incentive prospects for the NCAA as well. During the 2008–2009 period, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) earned approximately $591 million from television and marketing. Additionally, college sports merchandise sales exceeded $4 billion, and multiple institutions secured multimedia rights agreements valued at over $100 million (Berkowitz, 2009). At the Division I level, intercollegiate athletics represents a substantial enterprise, and it is increasingly becoming so at the Division II, III, and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) levels as well (Hodge & Tanlu, 2009). Furthermore, media significantly influences the commercialization and financial assessment of college athletics. Gilmore (2018) investigated the extent of athletics' dependence on various media platforms and channels (for example, television, radio, and social media). Multiple factors affect the connections between the NCAA and the different media types it collaborates with (Gilmore, 2018). According to Gilmore (2018), ESPN agreed to pay $5.64 billion to the NCAA for the rights to broadcast games from NCAA-sanctioned schools. These kinds of multimillion-dollar TV deals have facilitated the transition of college football into the effective business model. NCAA college football broadcasts dominate local and cable sports channels. Cable networks' ability to provide nationwide coverage of prominent college teams has sparked a significant change. As universities ventured

into television markets to promote their college football programs, they began to recognize the available revenue potential. At one point, Notre Dame was the only major Division I university with a television contract; it remains among the few with a dedicated deal with a major network, specifically NBC. The NBC Sports Group signed a deal with Notre Dame to extend a 10-year contract allowing the network to broadcast Notre Dame football games through 2025. Reports indicated that the contract between NBC and Notre Dame was valued at around $15 million each year. In a methodical manner, additional universities started to obtain profitable television contracts (Gilmore, 2018).

The funding of intercollegiate athletics in the United States encompasses several intriguing aspects. Unlike much of the world, U.S. colleges and universities run extensive intercollegiate athletic programs that support numerous men's and women's sports featuring hundreds of participants. Numerous teams compete in large, high-capacity venues and attract hundreds of thousands of fans every season. These intercollegiate sports programs have correspondingly substantial budgets. Ticket sales, concessions, media presence, licensed merchandise sales, and various other sources create significant revenue streams (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2006).

Universities have recognized the financial potential of television branding, which enhanced and extended their visibility to audiences they would not typically reach. In 2012, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) expanded to include Texas A&M and Missouri. This expansion alone generated $420 million from TV and radio rights agreements. Typically, the television revenue from university athletic programs generates over $15 million each year for football teams in the prominent NCAA conferences. Television income has provided an increasing number of universities financial security. This achievement has motivated universities to explore additional ways to utilize media channels for increased income to fund their athletic departments, with the football program

often being central to that approach (Gilmore, 2018). One such example is the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), which is part of the broader NCAA that organizes the sports programs for numerous universities. In 2012, the 125 FBS schools generated $6.9 billion in revenue; however, just 23 programs declared a profit for their athletic departments. Along with the rise in televised games comes increased advertising. During the 2011 college football season, companies invested approximately $1 billion in national television advertisements, marking a 27% increase from the previous season. Louisville is home to the country's richest and most successful basketball program. During the 2011–2012 season, Louisville's basketball revenue surpassed $42 million, yielding a profit of $27 million (Kogan & Greyser, 2014).

Over the last ten years, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball has grown significantly in popularity, as evidenced by its revenues. In 2010, CBS Sports and Turner Broadcasting announced a 14-year agreement to broadcast the annual Division I basketball playoff tournament for $10.8 billion. In 2012, a 30-second TV ad in the final four was priced at $700,000, and those networks generated over $1 billion by broadcasting the NCAA basketball playoffs that year (Borghesi, 2018).

As a point of reference, the NCAA financial statements for 2025 provide an insightful view into the magnitude and formalization of college sports in the United States. Examining this data enables a more distinct comparison of the governance and organizational models of university sports in Lebanon and France. According to the NCAA's latest financial report (2025), it provides detailed information on income, expenses, and revenues. The document presents consolidated financial statements of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for the fiscal years ending August 31, 2024, and 2023, along with an independent auditor's report and financial infor-

mation. The NCAA's 2024 financial report shows a significant deficit, primarily due to the anti-trust agreement. In 2024, total revenue reached $1,376,591,143, with major contributions coming from television and marketing rights fees amounting to $948,383,496. Total costs amounted to $3,915,240,186, which includes $2,704,492,297 allocated for the antitrust settlement (NCAA, 2025). Along with revenues and expenses, the NCAA's financial statement for 2025 also reveals its financial status and cash management approaches.

As of August 31, 2024, the NCAA possesses considerable financial resources for general spending, exceeding $1 billion. This comprises cash, receivables, and investments, demonstrating solid liquidity. Financial resources on hand: $1.03 Billion as of August 31, 2024. The financial assets of the NCAA increased from $815.3 million in 2023, with the 2025 report indicating $265.8 million in cash, $55.6 million in receivables, and $705.9 million in investments (NCAA, 2025).

The NCAA's financial report for 2025 also discusses revenue recognition and allocation. The NCAA generates income from various channels, such as television rights and championships, with an overall revenue of $1.24 billion for the fiscal year 2024. Upcoming revenue forecasts indicate considerable figures for 2025 and later (NCAA, 2025).

As a nonprofit organization, the NCAA demonstrates its commitment to its mission by investing in student-athletes to help them thrive in sports, academics, and life. The NCAA gains the majority of its yearly revenue from two main sources: television and marketing rights for the Division I Men's Basketball Championship, as well as ticket sales for all championships. These funds are allocated in over a dozen ways—nearly all of which provide direct support to NCAA institutions, conferences, and nearly 500,000 student-athletes (NCAA, 2025). Approximately 60% of the NCAA's yearly income—about $600 million—is directly allocated to Division I member

institutions and conferences each year, while over $150 million supports Division I championships. Divisions II and III receive 4.37% and 3.18% of the total NCAA revenue, respectively, which are used to finance championships and support their member institutions. The NCAA additionally supports various services and educational initiatives for student-athletes and member institutions, along with multiple scholarship, grant, and internship opportunities (NCAA, 2025). To further demonstrate the dominance of college sports in the U.S. elite sports landscape, it is important to analyze the significant funding of sports facilities and the lucrative salaries of coaches, both of which underscore the impact of collegiate programs on the wider sports environment.

Regarding sports facilities, between 2009 and 2014, institutions within the NCAA's six major sports conferences have collected over $3.9 billion for new athletic facilities, frequently prioritizing the construction of new stadiums or renovations of current ones among their expenses (Judge et al., 2014). Moreover, colleges and benefactors invest millions of dollars to improve their sports facilities in order to attract new athletes and retain their coaching staff. For instance, Kansas State finished its new sports facilities in 2015 at an astonishing expense of $68 million (Grenardo, 2018).

Moving forward to the salaries of college coaches, major college sports have transformed into an $11 billion annual business. College coaches, for example, earn millions in salaries alone. Indeed, when considering just base salary, head coaches of the leading football programs 'receive more than the total amount their institutions allocate for all athletic scholarships'. Jim Harbaugh, former head coach of the University of Michigan football squad, earned a salary exceeding $9 million for the 2016 season. Numerous men's college basketball coaches earn compensation packages worth seven figures, such as John Calipari, former head coach of the University of Kentucky men's basketball team, who was paid more than $7.1 million in 2017. Some assistant football

coaches, including three from Michigan's staff, earn starting salaries of $1 million per year, while most assistant coaches earn six-figure base salaries or more. 41% of assistant football coaches earned more than $250,000 in base salary, not counting various performance bonuses and earnings from apparel firms (Grenardo, 2018). Numerous college football and men's basketball coaches similarly obtain substantial bonuses. The majority of the potential bonuses for head football coaches fall between six and seven figures (as of the latest tally, there are thirty-two coaches eligible for bonuses of at least $1 million), with the top bonus exceeding $3.8 million. In 2015, college football coaches earned nearly $12.4 million in bonuses related to championships, bowl game participations, and postseason honors (Grenardo, 2018).

A significant factor indicating the popularity of college sports is the high attendance at American college games. As reported by the National Football Foundation, more than 216 million people tuned in to the NCAA football regular season, while an extra 126 million viewers watched the college bowl games. Additionally, college football recorded more than 48.9 million spectators attending games (Gilmore, 2018). A major development highlighting the role of college sports in the U.S. elite sports environment is the emergence of the Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) era, which has significantly altered the dynamics of amateur athletics.

After years of discussion and uncertainty, the NCAA saw nearly all of its strict limitations on student-athlete compensation lifted on June 21, 2021. Certainly, after an extensive political campaign against the outdated amateurism model of the NCAA, the majority of these limiting regulations have been removed. Starting in July 2021, over two dozen states enacted laws regulating payments for student-athletes. In response, the NCAA implemented a temporary policy allowing all student-athletes nationwide to engage in previously prohibited activities, such as profiting from their own name, image, and likeness (NIL) via product endorsements, public appearances,

and entrepreneurial efforts (Taylor, 2022). After years of being barred from earning money, student-athletes can now collaborate with well-known brands to capitalize on their NIL rights. Shortly after, prominent college football and basketball athletes secured significant agreements with companies and brands. For instance, Miami Hurricanes quarterback D'Eriq King revealed an NIL agreement with The Wharf, a nearby eatery in Miami, where he would receive $2,000 per hour of appearance. In the same vein, Hanna and Haley Cavinder from the Fresno State Bulldogs revealed one of the largest NIL agreements so far with Boost Mobile (Taylor, 2022).

In conclusion, college athletics have established themselves as a major presence in the U.S. elite sports arena, impacting both the financial and competitive aspects of American sports. The financial dimensions of college sports are vast, with athletic departments nationwide operating on budgets that rival those of professional sports franchises. Media rights agreements for prominent college sports such as American Football and Basketball have surged into some of the most profitable broadcasting contracts in the nation, placing college athletics on par with professional leagues like the NFL and NBA regarding TV visibility and market worth.

The emergence of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rights has enhanced the significance of college athletes within the larger sports landscape. Athletes can now earn income from their personal brands. This shift highlights how college athletics have transformed from a conventional amateur system into a commercial force, producing a new generation of athletes who attract considerable attention and resources prior to entering professional leagues. As college sports continue to capture large television viewership, securing significant sponsorship agreements, and producing athletes who frequently advance to top-tier professional sports, it is evident that collegiate athletics have evolved beyond being merely a pathway to elite sports—they are now a crucial component

of the elite sports landscape. College programs are essential for nurturing talent, generating revenue, and shaping the sports culture in the United States, making them integral to the nation's overall sports identity.

The following comparison emphasizes the disparities between the university sports frameworks in the United States and France, concentrating on organization, financial support, media visibility, and the involvement of universities in athletic development. This comparison highlights how each nation supports student-athletes and promotes the visibility of competition. In the United States, collegiate sports occupy a key role in both academic and athletic spheres as student-athletes must excel in high school before being scouted by universities. Educational institutions, including schools and universities, are essential in fostering the growth of student-athletes by providing organized training programs, scholarships, and robust academic-athletic support frameworks. The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) brings in billions of dollars each year, offering substantial salaries for coaches and increasing financial prospects for student-athletes via Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) deals. University campuses feature large stadiums and cutting-edge sports facilities that rival those of professional teams. The media exposure is significant, with comprehensive broadcasting agreements with major networks such as ESPN, CBS, and FOX Sports, which enhance the prominence and reputation of college competitions. In contrast, university sports in France function on a considerably smaller scale, without large sports facilities and major media partnerships that distinguish the American collegiate sports system. Although university competitions are overseen by the FFSU, they lack the same cultural or financial significance. In France, the development of young athletes is primarily managed by clubs that function outside of the university system, rather than within schools. Facilities are generally more limited, and exposure of university-level athletics is mainly confined to the FFSU's website, social media,

and YouTube—which is quite different from the prominent TV agreements observed in the U.S. In general, the U.S. system significantly commercializes and formalizes college sports, transforming them into prominent national spectacles, while in France, university sports stay a specialized interest with minimal infrastructure and visibility.

Lebanon has only a limited financial resources dedicated to the sports sector, and the government does not have a strategic plan to enable elite sporting success. Numerous nations, including Lebanon, are classified as weak states: ‘A weak state is one that does not possess the ability to perform efficiently in various state functions’ (Reiche, 2017). Issues affecting Lebanon and other nations include challenges in executing policies to enhance the elite sports sector, insufficient government financing, and reliance on external assistance to support Olympic athletes. An example of implementation failure is Lebanon’s 2010–2020 Ministry of Youth and Sport Strategy, published in 2009. However, as Mazen Ramadan (head of Lebanon’s delegation for Rio 2016) stated in an interview with Reiche, "it was never executed; what occurred was largely by chance." The strategic plans outlined the mission, values, and goals for the sports sector in Lebanon (Reiche, 2017). Moreover, stakeholders in the sports movement are affected by the political parties’ competition for overrepresentation, which is a fundamental aspect of the nation’s political framework. This focus on winning an internal power struggle has entirely eclipsed the desire to excel in global competitions. This partly clarifies the minimal budget allocated for elite sport, which results in the absence of strategies at macro, meso, and micro levels that could help athletes succeed in the Olympics: Effective governance; encouragement of widespread participation; systems for identifying talent; support for athletic careers; training infrastructures; advancement of coaching programs; focus on sports with medal potential; enhancement of women’s involvement in sport, investment in sports science, and the hosting of national and international events (Nassif, 2017).

Additionally, corruption impacts the presence of elite sports in Lebanon, evident in problems like insufficient transparency, unequal resource allocation, and a lack of accountability among sports organizations.

Corruption in Lebanese athletics mirrors national corruption. Corruption is present and can be manifested in two ways (Nassif, 2014): financial corruption, marked by the misappropriation of funds and administrative corruption occurs when individuals are 'parachuted' into various federations based on their political loyalty rather than their skills. Furthermore, politics and confessionalism impact elite sports in Lebanon. Given this political setup, the Lebanese sports community is likely to continue suffering from political meddling due to confessional overrepresentation, resulting, as historical evidence indicates, in a lack of transparency. Consequently, it is hard to anticipate that Lebanon will address its systemic issues (Nassif, 2022). In general, political influence and authority are significant concerns in Lebanese sports that distract focus from the sector's development (Al-Masri 2016; Maugendre 2018; Mouawad 2018). Consequently, there is no official regulation, decree, or legislation concerning elite sport endorsed by the government (Nassif, 2017).

Next, the focus shifts to the role of universities in Lebanon's sports landscape, while analyzing the university sports systems in U.S., Lebanon, and France, many significant similarities and differences emerge. The university system in the United States is marked by considerable funding for sports, featuring substantial budgets for athletic scholarships, considerable income from television contracts, sponsorship deals, and ticket sales, along with robust institutional backing for fostering competitive sports programs. This indicates that the American university sports system differs significantly from both the French and Lebanese approaches, especially regarding funding, commercialization, and the level of institutional backing.

This comparative examination of the university sports systems in America, France, and Lebanon highlights important distinctions and similarities in governance, the position of university sports in elite sports in each country, development routes for student-athletes, eligibility for student-athlete participation, and the status of sports facilities. A crucial distinction arises when evaluating the function of university sports in the United States, France, and Lebanon. The U.S. and France are acknowledged as leading countries in global sports, whereas Lebanon is a minor player in elite athletic competition. Significantly, in France, the university sports framework is not an essential element in elite sports advancement; the nation's high-performance system operates efficiently via other structures like national training centers and sport federations. This differs from the U.S., where collegiate athletics play a key role in nurturing top-tier athletes. In contrast, Lebanon does not possess a well-organized university sports framework or an elite sports system, highlighting the necessity for strategies tailored to the specific context rather than simply copying foreign models. In the United States, the sports environment is organized around colleges that seek to recruit elite high school athletes, establishing a clear route for these individuals to progress to professional sports and Olympic events. This system offers not only scholarships but also a wealth of resources, including coaching and training facilities, allowing the most gifted individuals to reach their full potential in a competitive setting. Conversely, France's elite sports system functions distinctively by concentrating on identifying talented young athletes via leading clubs or national organizations. These organizations are accountable for delivering the infrastructure required for athletes to obtain professional contracts and represent France in the Olympics. Although some athletes might train with universities, the main development takes place in these specialized clubs that emphasize athletic achievement. While a limited number of Lebanese student-athletes

obtain scholarships, most elite athlete development takes place in clubs, highlighting the importance of these organizations in talent development. Lebanese universities are seen as important assets that improve athletes' experiences and offer assistance, yet they do not hold the essential, pivotal role that U.S. universities have in the athletic pathways of their students.

Overall, in the United States, college athletics play a crucial role in the elite sports framework, frequently acting as the primary route to professional leagues through organized programs and national visibility. In the United States, student-athletes usually need to show exceptional athletic and academic achievements during high school to be eligible for university recruitment. Conversely, in nations such as France and Lebanon, top athletes are usually nurtured through clubs and federations, while university sports play a limited role in their advancement to the professional tier. Regarding training opportunities, although the three models vary in structure, a significant commonality between the Lebanese and French systems is that student-athletes may compete in both club and varsity competitions, unlike in the U.S., where athletes are generally restricted to varsity teams. Concerning sports facilities, each sports model has its own unique features. Universities in the U.S. generally feature expansive on-campus stadiums, while the majority of Lebanese universities often have limited on-campus sports facilities and must rent external courts, and French universities provide both on-campus facilities and access to citywide sports complexes. Ultimately, in terms of governance, the U.S. system operates mainly independently (for example, the NCAA), while both the Lebanese and French systems are regulated by the government, with supervision from NSFs like FSUL in Lebanon and FFSU in France. Although the U.S. higher education system prioritizes sports scholarships, the recognition of student-athletes, and competitive sports success, the situation in Lebanon is notably different. While a few Lebanese universities

have incorporated some aspects of this model, athletic scholarships are still rare, and the percentage of students who benefit from them is small. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to claim that Lebanon is comparable to the U.S. regarding institutional investment in sports or the strategic emphasis on athletic talent in universities.

The role of Lebanese universities in sports is still somewhat restricted, similar to the French model that they officially follow, due to similarities in governance (as perceived in FFSU & FSUL cases). Although university sports in Lebanon have many similarities in the way they are conducted compared to France, it is important not to conclude that overall, the Lebanese sport model is similar to the one in France, since the latter has an established elite sports structure that reduces the need for significant participation from universities. However, there are indications that this role may gradually evolve. Some universities in Lebanon, particularly those adhering to the American educational system, have begun offering sports scholarships—a feature more commonly associated with the U.S. model. Even though these cases are few and distinct, they introduce elements typically absent from the French model. This subtle incorporation of U.S.-style practices highlights the possible emergence of a 'hybrid' model in Lebanese university athletics, suggesting that over time, the field may slowly evolve into a more dynamic and student-athlete-focused framework.

Moreover, the recent partnership between MTV Lebanon, OMT (Online Money Transfer), and the Lebanese University Sports Federation (FSUL) represents a significant milestone in promoting university sports in Lebanon. According to OMT's website, the 2025 basketball and futsal championship finals were formally launched with OMT's assistance, featuring coaches, university students, and academic figures participating and broadcasting on MTV Lebanon (OMT, 2025). This degree of publicity and corporate backing indicates a growing interest in university-level

athletics. While Lebanon has yet to construct a fully formed elite sports model, projects like these demonstrate the possibility of using the university system to foster athletic talent and lay the framework for future elite sports growth.

Chapter 4: A Comparative Analysis of University Sports Systems: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings from Lebanese Student-Athletes

Interviews were carried out with 30 student-athletes from various universities in Lebanon, representing Lebanese, American, and French educational systems, in order to compare the sports systems of Lebanon, France, and the United States, and to better understand where Lebanon stands in relation to these countries.

The survey consisted of 21 questions, divided into quantitative and qualitative parts. Twelve of the quantitative questions were collected through Google Forms, which provided percentages, charts, and basic statistical data. These questions looked into aspects like how visible university competitions are, how student-athletes are recognized, how university competitions are promoted, and participants' views on competition and skill improvement. The remaining nine qualitative questions were analyzed using IRaMuTeQ, a tool that helped identify key themes, categories, and similarity patterns. IRaMuTeQ, which stands for R Interface for Multidimensional Analysis of Texts and Questionnaires, was developed by Pierre Ratinaud. Initially available only in French until 2009, it now includes complete dictionaries in several languages and is built using Python, relying on features from the statistical software R (Souza et al., 2018).

This analysis offered deeper insights into the experiences and opinions of Lebanese student-athletes competing in the FSUL competitions, emphasizing the strengths and challenges of the Lebanese sports model and how it compares to those of France and the United States.

4.1 Section 1 – Quantitative Results (From Google Forms): Percentages, Charts, Basic Stats

Among the 30 respondents surveyed, 6 (20%) are from AUT, 1 (3.33%) from LAU, 8 (26.67%) from LU, 9 (30%) from NDU, 2 (6.67%) from RHU, 1 (3.33%) from USEK, 2 (6.67%) from UOB, and 1 (3.33%) from USJ. That adds up to a total of 30 participants, making up 100% of the group.

4.1.1 The Quality of Coaching and Training Provided by Lebanese Universities

The study showed that the majority of participants had a positive view of the coaching and training offered by Lebanese universities. About half of the participants (50%) stated the coaching they received was excellent, highlighting that they had coaches who were highly skilled and supportive, and who gave well-organized training sessions. Another 36.7% stated the coaching was good, meaning they felt they received enough training from capable coaches. Together, these figures show that 86.7% of student-athletes are satisfied with the level of coaching at their universities.

Figure 22: *Student Perceptions of Coaching and Training Quality*



Note. This chart shows how student-athletes rate the quality of the coaching they receive. It captures their perspective on whether the training provided by their universities meets their needs and standards (N=30).

However, 10% rated the coaching as only average, which points to some issues or uneven quality in the training, although there were some positive aspects. A small group (3.3%) were not satisfied and gave it a poor rating, while no one said it was very poor.

4.1.2 The Influence of the Lebanese Sports System on Student-Athletes' Decisions Between Sports and Education

The results show that the Lebanese sports system does not strongly push student-athletes to focus more on sports than on their studies. Only 6.7% of respondents said the system strongly encourages them to choose sports over education, while 10% said it somewhat encourages that choice. On the other hand, many participants felt the system does not significantly encourage them to make sports their main path. One-third of respondents, or 33.3%, said they were not sure or felt it made no difference in their decision regarding sports and education. Additionally, 26.7% said the system somewhat encourages them to focus more on education than sports, and 23.3% felt it strongly pushes them to prioritize education.

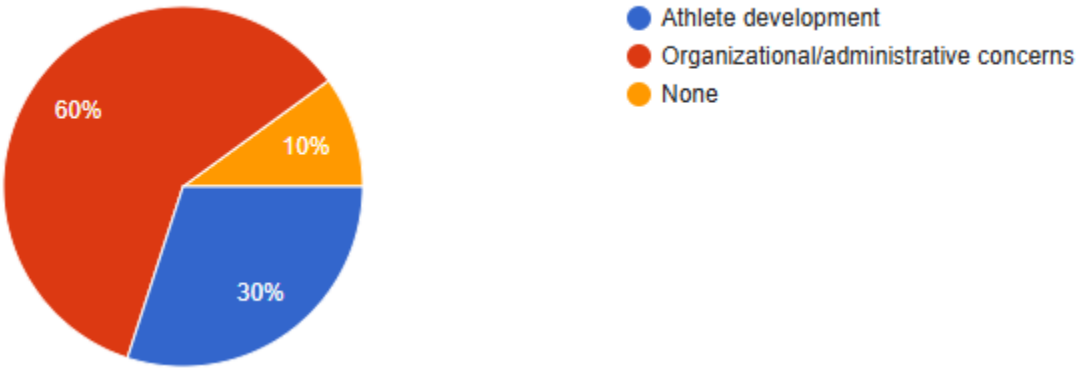
Figure 23: *The Impact of the Sports System on Students' Academic and Athletic Choices*



4.1.3 The FSUL's Emphasis: Athlete Development or Organizational/Administrative Concerns

The responses about whether the FSUL focuses more on athlete development or on organizational and administrative issues show a key concern among student-athletes. Most participants (60%) believe the FSUL is mainly focused on administrative tasks and organizational matters rather than helping students grow as athletes. This implies that things like rules, procedures, and managing events take up a lot of the FSUL's attention, possibly at the cost of policies that support athletes' training and personal growth. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents surveyed believe the FSUL does prioritize athlete development, indicating that some efforts are being made to help improve athletic performance and training, although this support may not be consistent across all universities. Another 10% stated that the FSUL does not focus on either area, which suggests that there's a lack of clear direction or a main goal for the organization. These results point out a significant difference between how the FSUL runs its operations and how it supports athletes in university sports in Lebanon. This indicates that the FSUL needs to find a better balance between managing things well and helping student-athletes develop.

Figure 24: *Where the FSUL Focuses: Athlete Development vs. Administrative Tasks*



4.1.4 The Transparency of the FSUL Rules, Selection Criteria, and Decision-Making Processes for Student-Athletes

The results show that participants have different opinions about how clear the rules of FSUL are, how the teams for national universities are chosen, and how decisions are made. About 26.7% of the respondents said they were 'neutral or not sure', meaning they did not clearly understand how transparent the system was. Another 33.3% said the system was 'somewhat transparent', which means the rules and decisions are mostly clear, but there are some aspects that remain unclear. Around 26.7% believed the system was 'very transparent', with clear and well-explained rules and decisions. Meanwhile, 6.7% thought the system was 'somewhat opaque', indicating that the rules and decisions were not always clear or consistent. Another 6.7% described it as 'very opaque', suggesting that the rules, selection process, and decisions are mostly not shared or hard to understand. These responses highlight the different views that student-athletes have about the transparency of the FSUL system.

Figure 25: *Student Perspectives on the Transparency of FSUL Rules*

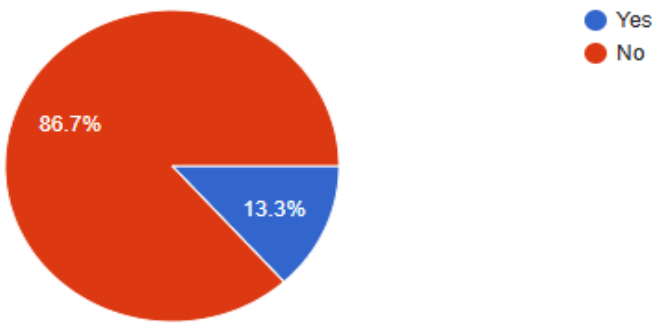


4.1.5 Opportunities for Lebanese Athletes on an International Scale

Most of the respondents surveyed, which is 86.7%, said that Lebanese athletes don't receive enough attention from international scouts, coaches, or professional teams. They feel like there is

insufficient opportunity for them to be recognized at a global level. On the other hand, 13.3% of the participants believed that Lebanese athletes receive sufficient international exposure. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of student-athletes think their exposure to international opportunities is limited.

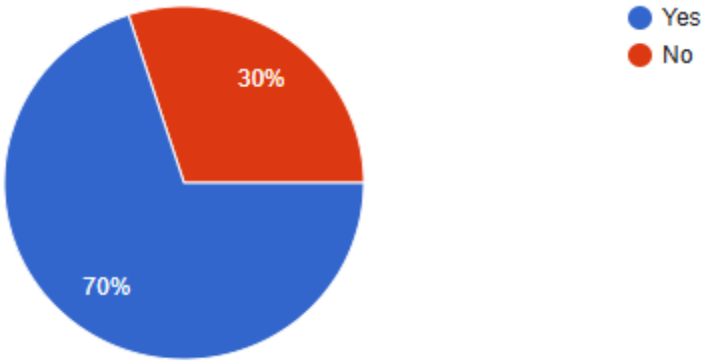
Figure 26: *International Opportunities for Lebanese Student-Athletes*



4.1.6 FSUL's Ability to Help Student-Athletes in Transitioning to National Teams or Professional Clubs

When asked if FSUL competitions help student-athletes move on to national teams or professional clubs, 70% of the respondents said 'yes', indicating that these competitions offer support or chances for moving up. On the other hand, 30% said 'no', indicating that they do no perceiv these competitions helping with such advancements.

Figure 27: *The FSUL's Role in Helping Athletes Move to Professional or National Teams*



4.1.7 Visibility of FSUL Competitions Within Universities and Lebanese Society

When asked about how visible FSUL competitions are within their university and in Lebanese society, the participants gave different answers. 36.7% said the competitions are somewhat visible both inside the university and in society. 20% said they are very visible in both areas. Another 20% believed the competitions are only visible within the university, while 20% believed they are rarely visible or not well-known. Just 3.3% claimed the competitions are not visible at all.

In total, more than half of the respondents (56.7%) think FSUL competitions have at least some level of visibility in both the university and society, but a significant number still feel their exposure is limited.

Figure 28: *How Visible are FSUL Competitions within Universities and in Lebanese Society?*

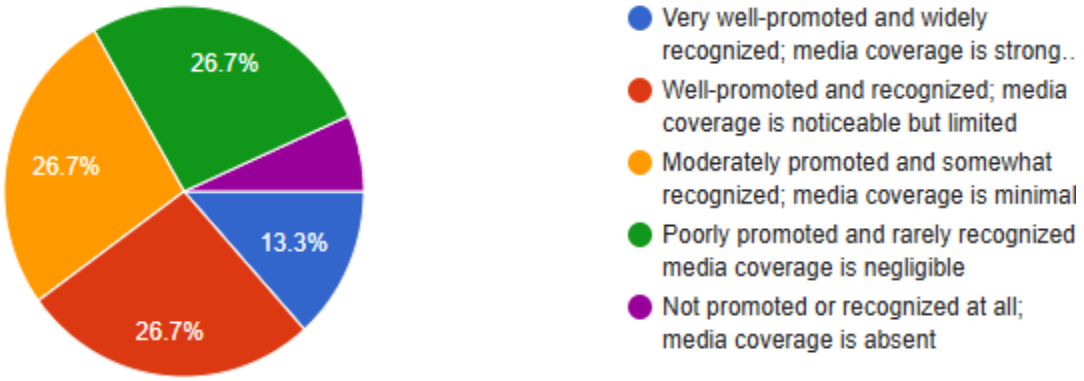


4.1.8 The Conditions of FSUL Events and the Role of Media Coverage

When asked about how FSUL events are promoted and recognized, and the role of media coverage, respondents had different opinions. About 26.7% said the events are not well promoted and receive limited recognition. Another 26.7% believed the events are somewhat promoted and recognized, but media attention remains low. A similar group, 26.7%, thought the events are promoted and recognized fairly well, with some media coverage, although it remains limited. 13.3% said the events are well promoted and widely recognized, thanks to strong and effective media coverage. Finally, 6.7% mentioned that the events aren't promoted or recognized at all and have no media presence.

Overall, the majority think FSUL events receive some level of promotion and recognition, but media coverage is still limited, and only a small number feel the events are widely known thanks to strong media support.

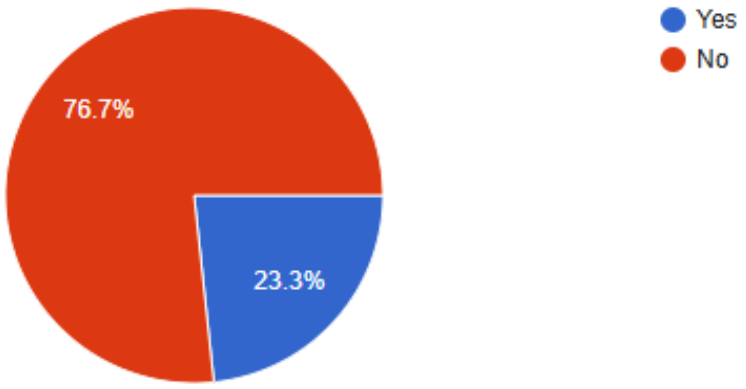
Figure 29: *The Quality of FSUL Events and the Impact of Media Coverage*



4.1.9. The Recognition Provided to Lebanese Athletes by Lebanese Sports System

When asked if the Lebanese sports system provides enough recognition to athletes, a majority of participants (76.7%) said no, while just 23.3% believed athletes are recognized enough.

Figure 30: *The Lebanese Sports System's Recognition of Student-Athletes*

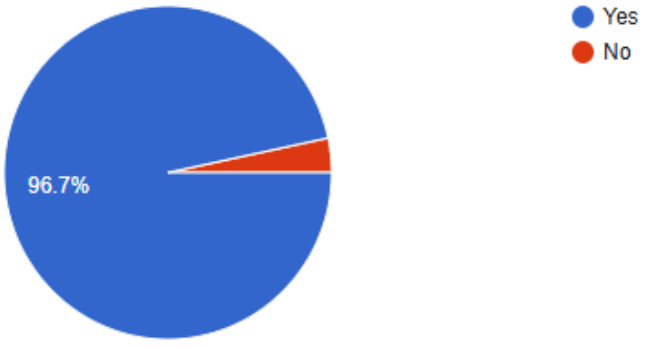


This indicates that many respondents believe there is a significant difference between how much athletes should be recognized and how much they actually are, highlighting that recognition is a key area requiring improvement in the Lebanese sports system.

4.1.10 Barriers in Lebanon That Limit Athletes from Fully Developing Their Potential

Most athletes in Lebanon face challenges that prevent them from reaching their full potential, according to nearly all respondents (96.7%). Only 3.3% disagreed, indicating that the majority experience obstacles such as limited resources, lack of support, or insufficient opportunities.

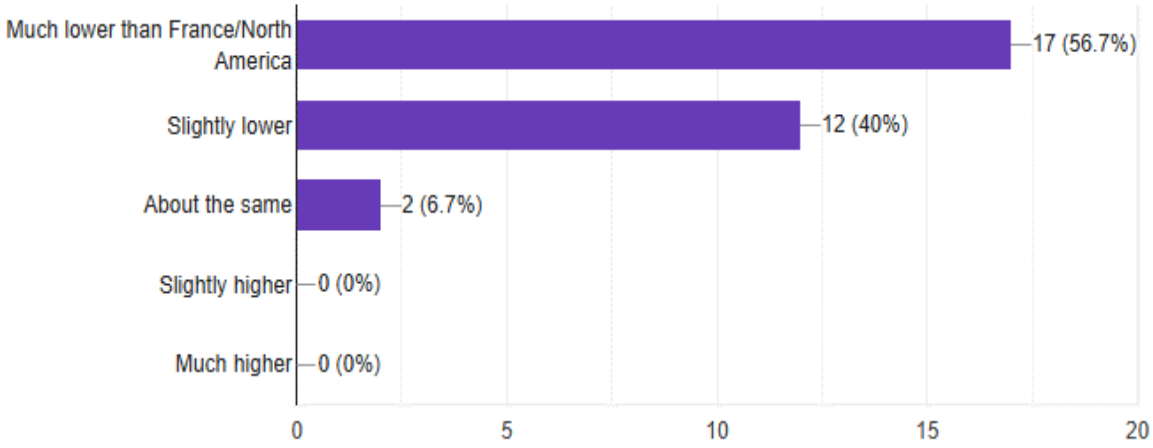
Figure 31: *Barriers Limiting the Potential of Lebanese Student-Athletes*



4.1.11 Level of Competition and Skill Development in Lebanon Compared to France or North America

When asked about how the level of competition and skill development in Lebanon compares to France or North America, 56.7% of respondents said it is significantly lower, 40% believed it is somewhat lower, and just 6.7% thought it is similar. This indicates that the majority perceive Lebanese sports as not meeting international standards.

Figure 32: C*ompetitive Levels and Skill Development: Lebanon vs. France and North America*



4.1.12 Analysis of the Results

The results show that the university sports environment in Lebanon has some positive aspects, especially in the quality of coaching, but there are major system issues that hinder athletes from developing and receiving proper recognition. Most student-athletes provided positive feedback about coaching and training, with 86.7% stating they were satisfied. This points to the presence of qualified coaches and organized training programs at certain universities. However, even with this strength, the overall Lebanese sports system does no encourage individuals to pursue sports as a career. Most student-athletes report that education is the main focus, and sports are

treated as a secondary activity. This reflects a wider cultural and institutional emphasis on academic success in Lebanon.

While 70% of student-athletes think FSUL competitions help them move up to higher levels of sport, 60% feel the federation is overly focused on managing events and administrative tasks rather than helping athletes grow. Also, many athletes are concerned about lack of transparency, insufficient international opportunities, and inconsistent media coverage. These issues suggest that the federation isn't focusing on what athletes really need. Almost all athletes (96.7%) agree that there are serious obstacles stopping them from reaching their full potential.

Common problems include insufficient recognition, limited visibility on the international stage, and not competing at the same level as in countries like France or North America. Even though FSUL competitions are somewhat known within universities, they have limited influence beyond campus and media attention is low.

4.2 Section 2 - Qualitative Results (From IRaMuTeQ): Statistics, Word Cloud, Reinert (CHD) Analysis, and Similarity Graphs

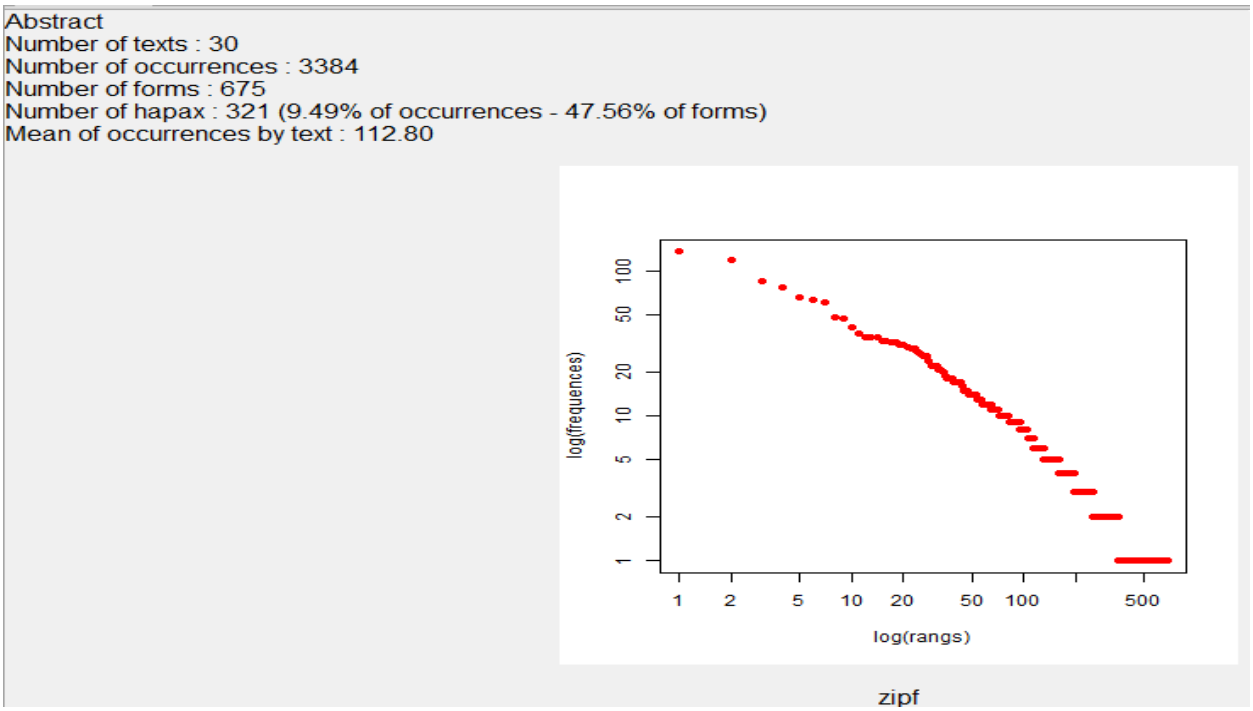
The data were analyzed using IRaMuTeQ, which included four analysis tools: descriptive statistics, creating word clouds, performing Reinert (CHD) analysis, and generating similarity graphs.

4.2.1 Statistical Analysis (Descriptive Metrics and Zipf's Law)

The statistical analysis of the corpus shows that the dataset is well distributed and includes a wide variety of language. There are 3,384 words used across 30 responses, indicating that participants engaged deeply with the topic. The presence of 675 different word forms and 321 words that only appear once (which is 47.56% of all the words) indicates that the data is rich in meaning and covers

a lot of different expressions. This high number of rare words is common in open-ended qualitative data, where participant's personal choices of words reflect their own experiences and situations.

Figure 33: *Statistical Analysis of Participant Responses: Descriptive Metrics and Zipf's Law Distribution*

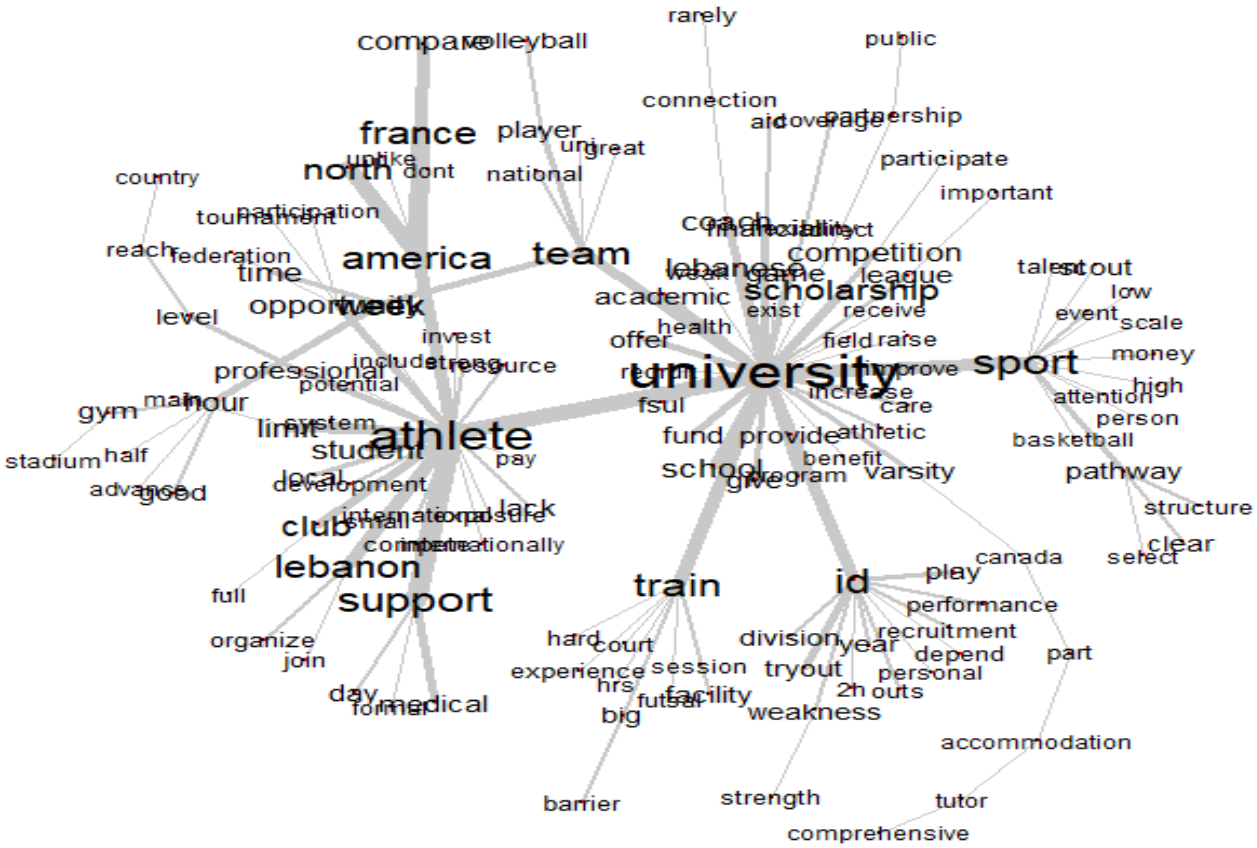


A graph showing the Zipfian distribution confirms that word usage follows natural language patterns, with a few words appearing often and many others appearing just once. Interestingly, several country names and comparison words like 'France', 'America', 'compare', 'better', and 'clear' appear in the less frequent group, suggesting that while these comparative expressions are not the most common, they are still important for understanding the meaning. This statistical summary shows that even though some main topics come up often, the dataset also includes detailed, individual comparisons between different national sports systems.

4.2.2 Similarities Analysis (Lexical Co-occurrence Graphs)

The analysis of similarities shows important insights into how participants connect ideas in their conversations. The graph is particularly informative. It shows that the word ‘athlete’ is connected to a group of other words like ‘support’, ‘student’, ‘opportunity’, ‘Lebanon’, ‘France’, and ‘America’. These words being linked together show how participants perceive being an athlete by comparing different places and institutions. This is eviden in phrases such as ‘medical support in France’ or ‘no financial aid in Lebanon’. The pairing of ‘opportunity’ with ‘America’ suggests that the U.S. system is perceived as a model for moving into professional sports.

Figure 34: *Similarities Analysis: Lexical Co-occurrence Graphs of Participant Responses*



Additionally, the graph has ‘university’ at its center, connected to words like ‘train’, ‘sport’, ‘coach’, ‘scholarship’, and again, the country names. This shows that universities are perceived not just as places for learning, but as important parts of the athlete’s life. The fact that FSUL is linked to ‘university’ and ‘weakness’ shows that participants express dissatisfaction with the system in Lebanon. On the other hand, when ‘university’ is connected to ‘scholarship’ or ‘competition’ and also to ‘America’ and ‘France’, it indicates that those systems are perceived as better organized and more supportive. So, this analysis clearly shows how respondents compare countries not just in what they state, but also in how they organize their thoughts and use words.

4.2.3 Word Cloud (Lexical Frequency Mapping)

This word cloud shows the main ideas about how sports and higher education connect, especially focusing on athletes at universities and their paths to success. Prominent words— ‘university’, ‘athlete’, ‘team’, ‘support’, and ‘train’—indicates the importance of universities in helping athletes grow. The mention of countries like America, France, and Lebanon suggests that the word cloud reflects comparisons how different places handle the mix of sports and education. Words like ‘scholarship’, ‘medical’, ‘academic’, ‘financial’, and ‘tutor’ indicate the various forms of support that student-athletes receive. The terms ‘club’, ‘professional’, ‘competition’, and ‘coach’ reflect the different groups and settings that help athletes develop. Words like ‘hour’, ‘week’, ‘session’, and ‘day’ illustrate the schedules of student-athletes. The word ‘opportunity’ along with ‘limit’ indicates that while some systems offer a lot of support, others may not have enough resources or access, which can create problems. From these observations, it can be concluded that university sports programs are very important for athlete development, especially in places like the U.S., where there are extensive scholarship opportunities. There are significant differences between countries in how athletes are supported and trained. Student-athletes have

very demanding schedules and need strong support from their universities to balance their studies and sports. Even though there are opportunities, many athletes still face challenges because of limited resources, financial constraints, or underdeveloped systems.

Figure 35: *Word Cloud of the Total Corpus Based on Lexical Frequency Mapping*



4.3 Comparative Interpretation of the Word Clouds According to the Sport Models (Lebanese, French, and American)

The IRaMuTeQ word-cloud analysis shows noticeable differences in how student-athletes view the university sports systems in Lebanon, France, and the U.S. Although the information comes from interviews with 30 Lebanese student-athletes discussing their own experiences, the common use of words like France, America, and Lebanon—along with terms such as support, scholarship, training, opportunity, and professional—suggests that these three systems are consistently being compared by student-athletes.

4.3.1 The Lebanese University Sports Model: Scarcity, Informality, and Limited Pathways

Words closely associated with the Lebanese model include: ‘Lebanon’, ‘weakness’, ‘lack’, ‘funding’, ‘facility’, ‘opportunity’, ‘connection’, ‘support’, ‘train’, and ‘limit’. These words suggest that student-athletes view the Lebanese system as one characterized by the following:

- Minimal institutional support, meaning financial, medical, and academic assistance is unreliable or inconsistent.
- Weak recruitment strategies, often depending on personal relationships instead of proper scouting or systems.
- Limited training conditions, with restricted access to modern courts, equipment, and qualified staff.
- Insufficient opportunities for international exposure, appearing in words such as rarely, none, or limited.
- Obstacles to long-term development, including funding shortages, lack of organization, and insufficient recognition of athletes.

Figure 36: *Word Cloud for the Lebanese Sport Model Based on Lexical Frequency Mapping*



In the word cloud, Lebanese athletes often connect ‘support’ and ‘facility’ with negative words, showing that the system relies more on personal effort than on an institutional framework. As a whole, the Lebanese model is perceived as not fully developed and missing the solid structure needed for athletes to grow and succeed.

4.3.2 The French University Sports Model: Structure, Organization, and Public Support

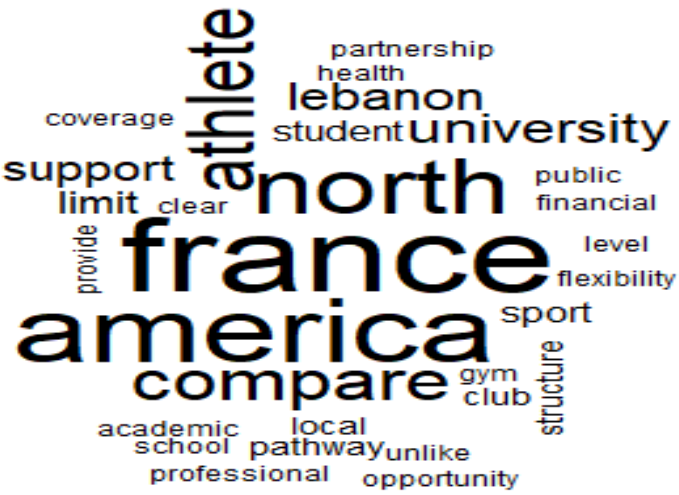
In contrast, terms associated with the French model include: ‘France’, ‘organized’, ‘system’, ‘health’, ‘coverage’, ‘flexibility’, ‘facility’, ‘public’, ‘partnership’. From these associations, Lebanese student-athletes perceive the French system as:

•More organized and governed, with more defined administrative pathways than in Lebanon.

•Providing publicly funded health services and academic flexibility for elite athletes.

•Benefiting from collaborations with local governments and public athletic spaces.

Figure 37: *Word Cloud for the French Sport Model Based on Lexical Frequency Mapping*



Nonetheless, the French system does not appear as commercialized or professional as the American counterpart. Terms such as ‘support’ and ‘organized’ have a positive association with the French model, whereas more impactful words such as ‘professional’, ‘scholarship’, or ‘career’ are frequently connected to the American setting. Consequently, the French model is viewed as organized, nurturing, and aligned with institutions, despite placing less emphasis on elite sports careers compared to the U.S. framework.

4.3.3 The American University Sports Model: Professionalization, Opportunity, and Athlete Development

Words associated with the American model include ‘America’, ‘scholarship’, ‘professional’, ‘opportunity’, ‘exposure’, ‘coach’, ‘competition’, ‘train’, ‘career’, and ‘development’. These associations reflect a perception of the American system as:

•Highly specialized, with established routes from collegiate athletics to national or professional competitions.

•Closely associated with scholarships and financial assistance, which consistently shows up in the cloud as a key characteristic.

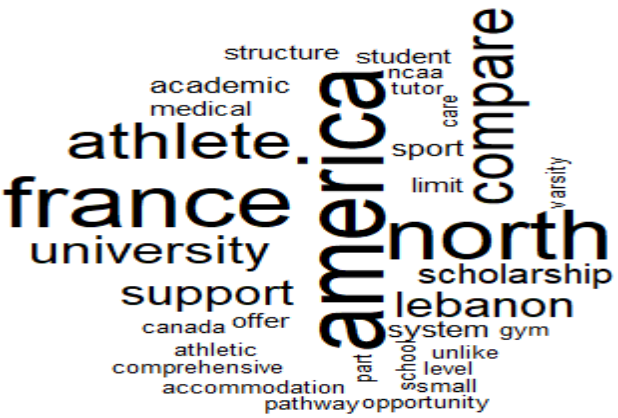
•Backed by advanced facilities, expert personnel, and rigorous training programs.

•Providing global exposure, talent identification networks, and routes to top-tier athletics.

•Highlighting the importance of athletic success alongside academic support for student-athletes.

The prevalence of terms like ‘scholarship’, ‘opportunity’, ‘professional’, and ‘competition’ indicates that Lebanese student-athletes perceive the American model as the most effective in nurturing elite athletes and providing long-term career opportunities.

Figure 38: *Word Cloud for the American Sport Model Based on Lexical Frequency Mapping*



4.3.4 Cross-Model Interpretation: How Athletes Perceive the Three Systems

The analysis of the word clouds highlights numerous recurring tensions:

- Opportunity vs. Limitation
    - America is linked to opportunity, advancement, and career visibility.
    - Lebanon is linked to limitation and a lack of structure and governance.
- Organization vs. Informality
    - France is connected to organized frameworks and institutional assistance.
    - Lebanon exhibits a lack of formality, poor planning, and dependence on personal connections.
- Professionalization vs. Amateurism

    - The U.S. model appears highly professionalized.
    - Lebanon is viewed as amateur and structurally weak, despite the presence of talented and motivated athletes.
- Financial Support vs. Financial Burden
    - Scholarships are found predominantly in America and are rarely in Lebanon.

This comparative framework aligns with the Reinert analysis, which categorized word groups linked to ‘training load’, ‘scholarships’, ‘scouting’, and ‘organized leagues’ as part of the American system, while groups made up of terms like ‘weakness’, ‘lack’, ‘funding’, and ‘facility’ were connected to the Lebanese model.

4.4 Conclusion: How Athletes Construct Their Perception of the Sport Models

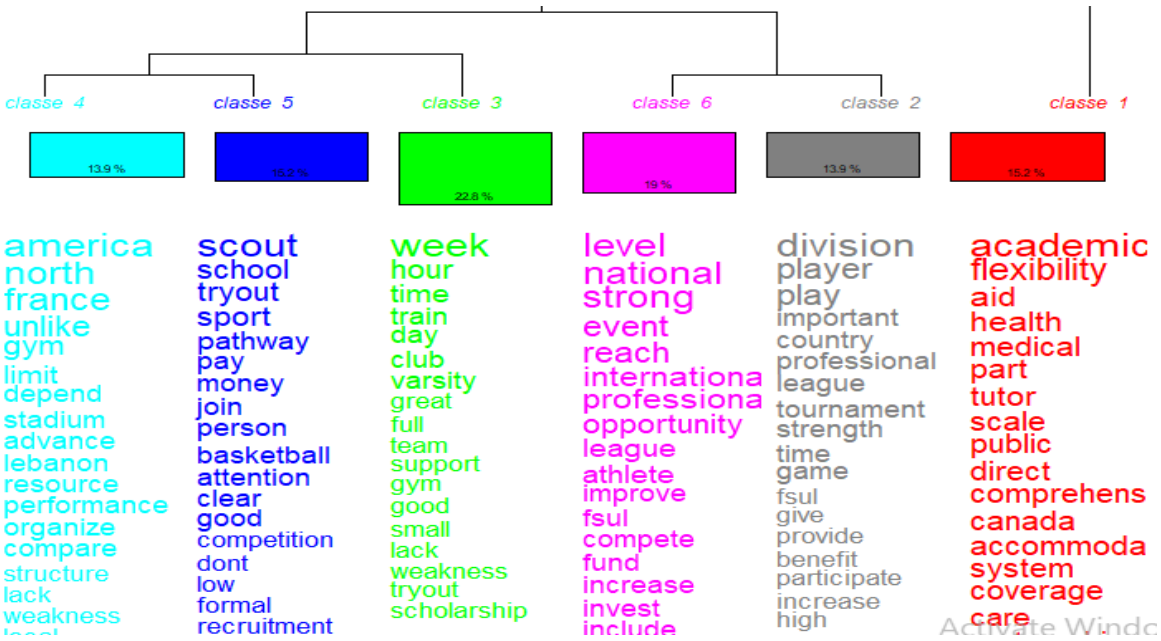
The word-cloud comparisons indicate that Lebanese student-athletes do not view their own sports system in isolation. Rather, they engage with it by viewing it through the perspective of two prominent global frameworks—French and American.

- The American model is viewed as the most promising for athletic development, providing competitiveness, exposure, and financial stability.
- The French model is perceived as organized and supportive but less focused on elite sports careers.
- The Lebanese model is consistently associated with structural weaknesses, inadequate support, and restricted opportunities, even with dedicated athletes and skilled coaches.

4.5 Reinert (CHD) Analysis

The CHD (Reinert) analysis of the corpus identified six distinct groups of words that clearly demonstrate differences between university sports in Lebanese, French, and American universities. The largest group (22.8%) focused on topics like planned weekly training, athlete routines, and sup-port for scholarships, highlighting the organization of sports programs in American universities. Other groups addressed about how athletes are selected, job opportunities, and different levels of competi-tion—words like tryouts, scouting, and leagues show how sports are becoming more professional in these schools. In contrast, the Lebanese situation was shown in a group with words like resource, structure, weakness, highlighting problems with facilities and organization when compared to American and French universities.

Figure 39: *Reinert (CHD) Analysis: Hierarchical Clustering of the Study Corpus*



4.6 Interpretation and Linkage to Comparative Study Context

The results from the four analytical tools used in IRaMuTeQ—statistical analysis, similarities analysis, Reinert (CHD) Analysis, and word cloud—provide a detailed understanding of how Lebanese student-athletes view their experiences in the university competitions. A common finding across all methods is the comparison between the Lebanese university sports system and those in France and the United States. Participants perceive the American system as providing more opportunities, scholarships, professional coaching, and exposure. The French system is thought to be more organized and supportive. In contrast, the Lebanese system is often perceived as facing difficulties, poor facilities, and insufficient support.

This is reflected in how the FSUL is associated with terms such as 'weakness', and how 'opportunity' and 'compare' are linked with 'France' and 'America'. The key positions of 'university' and 'athlete' in the co-occurrence graphs reflect the dual roles of the participants and highlight the important role universities play in shaping athletic careers. The athletes' responses highlight a contrast between Lebanese universities and American and French ones, especially in terms of financial help, training facilities, and pathways to professional careers, particularly in American universities. The IRaMuTeQ analysis not only supports the main topics from the original interviews but also shows that Lebanese student-athletes actively compare their situation with foreign systems.

Chapter 5: Comparative Analysis and Discussion

5.1 University Sports in France, the U.S., and Lebanon: A Comparative Study

The purpose of this section is to examine how university competitions are covered by the media in the FFSU, FSUL, and NCAA, and to demonstrate how this media attention reflects the

importance of university sports are in each of these countries. Beginning with the media visibility of collegiate athletics in France, it is useful to analyze coverage on prominent national sports outlets. L'Équipe was the leading online sports magazine by number of visits in France as of September 2025 (Statista, 2025). L'Équipe, France's most frequented sports news site, features little or no information regarding FFSU or university sports events. The website's content mainly centers around professional and high-level sports, featuring sections on football (including Ligue 1 and the UEFA Champions League), rugby (like the Top 14), tennis (major events such as Roland-Garros and Wimbledon), basketball (especially the NBA), and motorsport (such as Formula 1 and MotoGP) (L'Équipe, 2025). Consequently, university athletics are largely absent from the reporting offered by this prominent French sports media outlet. Thus, reporting on university sports in France is shared primarily through the official FFSU channels, which encompass the FFSU website, Instagram (13.2k followers), X (7,528 followers), Facebook (21k followers), and YouTube (FFSU TV, 1.04k subscribers) (FFSU, 2025).

After addressing university sports media coverage in France, the situation in Lebanon presents a different context, where university sports news is shared through various media outlets and platforms. Mr. Wadih Abdelnour, a well-known Lebanese sports journalist, states that the media presence within Lebanese university sports is evident in various forms. FSUL platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, are used to disseminate news, results, and livestreams. The majority of FSUL member universities also provide competition-related updates on their websites and social media accounts. Despite this activity, a considerable gap in media attention persists, as there is no specialized outlet or website dedicated to university sports. Abdelnour stresses the need for sponsors and investors to create such platforms to enhance the visibility of university sports. However, in recent years, media visibility has enhanced, particularly with the emergence of game

livestreams, which, although restricted to specific sports, have transformed into essential marketing instruments to entice larger platforms to invest in and air competitions. A significant instance is the collaboration between MTV Lebanon and OMT, enabling MTV to broadcast the futsal championship finals (personal communication with Mr. Wadih Abdelnour, 2025).

Within the Lebanese context, the Federation of University Sports in Lebanon (FSUL) lacks an official website. Updates on university sports are mainly shared through FSUL's social media channels, such as Instagram (6,795 followers) and Facebook (1.2k followers). Moreover, numerous universities frequently share news and outcomes of the competitions their teams take part in on their own websites, thus offering coverage of university sports at the institutional level. Mr. Abdelnour states that the leading and most dynamic sports websites in Lebanon are Malaeeb (https://www.malaeeb.com/) and Elsport (https://elsport.com/). It is essential to assess whether these two websites offer coverage of university sports (FSUL). The Malaeeb website features a segment focused on university sports; However, this section is quite new and offers only minimal coverage, missing in-depth details like daily results, match summaries, and extensive competition updates. In comparison, the Elsport website lacks any information pertaining to university sports.

In conclusion, in France, major sports media like L'Équipe hardly cover university sports, with all reporting done primarily through the official FFSU channels, including their website and social media platforms. In Lebanon, the FSUL does not have an official website, and news about university sports is mainly shared through FSUL's social media platforms, along with reports on specific universities' websites. Within the wider Lebanese sports media, only Malaeeb features a section dedicated to university sports, although its coverage is scarce, whereas Elsport completely overlooks this area. Consequently, both nations have limited coverage; however, beginning in 2025, the FSUL entered into an agreement with OMT (Online Money Transfer) to air the futsal

and basketball semi-finals and finals on MTV Lebanon. Established in 1998 as the first officially approved agent for Western Union in Lebanon, OMT grew over the years into a well-known leader in financial services, expanding its network to include more than 1,400 agents across the country. Based on this success, the company expanded its range of services to over 150, working with major partners like telecom companies, government agencies, private businesses, and both local and international donors (OMT, 2025). MTV was identified to be the most watched TV channel in Lebanon, with 39% of respondents surveyed stating they prefer it for getting news (Internews & Maharat Foundation, 2021). Moreover, MTV Lebanon holds the rights to broadcast both of Lebanon's main sports leagues. They obtained the rights to show Lebanese basketball league for four years starting in 2024, which helps increase the sport's visibility nationally (MTV, 2024). Also, MTV renewed its contract to broadcast the Lebanese football league for four seasons beginning in 2022, demonstrating that it is a major channel in sports media in the country (MTV, 2022). The agreement between FSUL and OMT to show futsal and basketball on MTV Lebanon may bring opportunities such as increased attention for university sports, possible sponsorships, better recognition for student-athletes, stronger partnerships, and improved university brand image.

While both France and Lebanon show limited media engagement, it is crucial to shift focus to the United States and examine how media coverage functions within the NCAA collegiate sports framework, taking the example of ESPN. The broadcasting of college athletics has existed for more than a hundred years, starting with college football airing on the radio in 1921 and subsequently being televised in 1939. A few years later, in the 1950s, sports broadcasting expanded, yet the NCAA feared it would reduce live ticket sales for the events. Although they attempted to ban televised broadcasts, a compromise was reached, leading to the implementation of their 'Television Plan', which permitted teams to air one game each Saturday (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2018).

This relates to sports broadcasting today, since college football is predominantly played on Saturdays. While the NCAA does not enforce a one-game-a-week rule, the popularity and demand for sports broadcasting surged significantly with every decade after the 1950s, reaching $60 million annuall in the 1980s. The NCAA aimed to dominate college football rights, but then 'the Supreme Court struck down the NCAA broadcast rights monopoly, leading to a significant rise in televised games, while per-game rights fees dropped to below a third of their former level' (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2018). Fees were recouped soon after as audience numbers rose and additional sports gained more visibility in sports broadcasting. Various networks and stations showcased a variety of sports. In 1980, ESPN broadcast the initial rounds of the NCAA men's basketball tournament, during which the term 'March Madness' was created. Following the 1984 Court ruling that disrupted the NCAA's national television deal with ABC, ESPN quickly started broadcasting select major college football games. ESPN2 launched in 1993, along with numerous other ESPNs thereafter (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2018).

In addition to traditional broadcasting, digital platforms have now become a key component. The internet has provided fans a way to engage with their favorite NCAA teams. In particular, the growth of the internet has offered multiple new methods for marketers to engage dedicated NCAA audiences. For instance, various media platforms have enabled fans to follow their preferred NCAA sports team through television, smartphones, or any other mobile device with internet access. Additionally, NCAA colleges utilize their websites to notify fans about future games, ticket availability, and contributions (Childs et al., 2022). Supporters can search for their NCAA schools and buy tickets for in-person matches or access an online stream for the event. Additionally, Childs et al. (2022) expressed that larger, affluent NCAA programs allocate significantly

more funds to their websites compared to other programs, increasing the perception of digital stratification.

As numerous platforms emerged and interest increased, both earnings and engagement increased significantly. While there are many conferences in NCAA sports, the 'Power 5' conferences (ACC, Big 12, Pac-12, Big Ten, and SEC) are the DI conferences that generate the highest revenue. The Power 5 conferences generate over $250 million each year from football bowl games, the NCAA basketball tournament, and television contracts, in addition to earnings from regular season games and additional sources (Sanderson & Siegfried, 2018). Though these are at the upper end of the range, certain smaller DI and DII institutions stream through platforms such as ESPN+ and FloSports. These have increased in recent years, allowing viewers to register and pay a monthly or annual fee for the services. A wide range of sports is broadcast on these platforms, while the larger or more favored games are displayed in prime time TV. Large Division I schools might retain the revenue from the broadcasts, whereas smaller institutions might not. Cork Gaines, writing for Business Insider (2024), indicates that schools are noton the same level, even within Division I: Of the 1,062 colleges and universities with NCAA varsity athletic teams, merely 396—less than half—generated at least $10 million from their sports teams in 2022, the latest year for which data is accessible. Just 56—roughly 5%—of those institutions earned at least $100 million. In addition to TV and streaming services, various games across all division levels are broadcast on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitch, or X (Mondello & Fortunato, 2022).

To provide a clearer picture of this media presence in the United States, the case of ESPN will be explored as a major outlet covering NCAA events. Beginning in 2006, the largest sports network in the U.S., the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN), commenced gathering data and assessing high school football players nationwide. ESPN's professional scouts,

analysts, and coaches assessed game footage of leading high school athletes and assigned each player a recruiting rating and a national ranking. These metrics aimed to evaluate high school player's preparedness to compete at the college level and serve as an indicator of the individual's athletic ability and talent. This information has been documented for every high school graduating class since 2006. Moreover, every high school student-athlete in the database possesses a profile page featuring an in-depth scouting report, recruitment activity, and media coverage about the player. In addition to comprehensive details on athletic skills, the ESPN database includes data on athletic scholarship opportunities. The player profile page displays every college football program that has made an official scholarship offer. Supplementary details encompass the status of the scholarship offers, specifically whether the offer was accepted or declined, along with whether the athlete took part in an official campus visit. Additional details encompassed the student-athlete's place of origin and secondary school (Holbrook, 2025).

Moreover, the ESPN 300 College Football recruiting database stands as one of the most thorough and meticulously assembled assessments of high school football talent nationwide. This database, led by ESPN's national recruiting director Tom Luginbill, relies on a comprehensive analysis of game films. The assessment process starts by compiling multiple games into a 'highlights reel', showcasing a mix of an athlete's outstanding plays, errors, and typical performances. This approach guarantees that scouts obtain a thorough understanding of a player's abilities, preventing a focus solely on impressive highlights (Holbrook, 2025).

Additionally, it is crucial to highlight that ESPN airs and disseminates NCAA events to viewers globally, greatly enhancing the international exposure and prominence of American college athletics. ESPN International broadcasted the 2015 Men's Final Four in 179 countries and

regions on 26 networks beyond the United States. In women's basketball, the 2015 national championship matchup between Connecticut and Notre Dame attracted 3.1 million viewers, while the ESPN networks broadcasted all 63 tournament games. ESPN International provided Final Four broadcasting through ESPN2 Australia, ESPN Brazil HD, ESPN Caribbean, ESPN Latin North, ESPN Tres North, ESPN Tres South, and ESPN UK. ESPN utilized social media to enhance coverage of the 2015 Women's Final Four (Denham, 2017).

An effective method to examine this media coverage is by exploring the ESPN website to visualize how NCAA events are reported and presented. The ESPN site delivers comprehensive coverage of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) events, presenting a broad array of detailed information regarding college sports competitions. It encompasses detailed outcomes for every game and offers extra features like game casts, summaries, box scores, play-by-play updates, team stats, and video highlights. Every game page includes comprehensive details, such as match recaps, attendance numbers, and the name of the stadium where the event occurred (ESPN, 2025). With this comprehensive approach, ESPN guarantees that college sports are showcased with the same thoroughness and expertise usually dedicated to major professional leagues (ESPN, 2025).

On February 27, 2025, the NCAA shared its financial reports for the 2023–24 fiscal year. They made $1.38 billion, which is more than the $1.28 billion they earned the year before. However, these numbers do not reflect the full size of the college sports business. The NCAA's reports do not include money from the Division I Football Subdivision (FBS), which operates largely independently and makes billions from TV deals, sponsors, and ticket sales. The NCAA has very little control over revenue outside of the March Madness basketball tournament. Their main income comes from TV contracts between athletic conferences and TV networks. The college sports

industry generated $13.6 billion in 2022, which is more than Major League Baseball ($10.9 billion), the National Basketball Association ($9.9 billion), and the National Hockey League ($6 billion) (Brown, 2025).

In the United States, colleges usually have a dedicated athletics website that consolidates all details regarding their sports programs. These platforms offer extensive features like schedules and outcomes for all varsity teams, thorough rosters for every team, options to buy tickets online for games and events, official merchandise stores, and details about Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) processes. Moreover, the same content and updates are consistently shared across multiple social media platforms, such as Instagram, X, Facebook, and YouTube, further boosting visibility, engagement, and fan interaction.

In summary, when examining how university sports are covered in the media across the FFSU, FSUL, and NCAA, significant differences emerge in their visibility and promotion. In France and Lebanon, university sports are not really part of the main sports news. Even though there have been new efforts, such as livestreams in Lebanon and regular updates from institutions, university sports still did not receive sufficient attention to gain broader national recognition. On the other hand, in the U.S., NCAA games receive a lot of media coverage. Networks like ESPN offer professional reporting, online interaction, and even worldwide broadcasts. This strong media support makes college sports very popular and shows how important they are economically and culturally. Overall, these differences show how much media attention affects how important university sports are considered in each country.

5.1.1 Support Systems for Athletes in Higher Education: Sports Scholarships, NIL Regulations in the U.S., and the Elite Athlete (Sportif de Haut Niveau – SHN) Designation

Aside from media visibility, the manner in which student-athletes are appreciated and backed varies significantly. This is especially clear when contrasting the U.S. Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) model with France's Elite Athletes framework.

5.1.1.1 NIL regulations in the United States. The implementation of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) rules in the United States has greatly broadened the financial framework of college athletics. This reform allows athletes to directly leverage their personal brand and market worth, signifying a transition from institutionally managed support to personalized, market-oriented prospects. The growth of NIL payments created something called 'collectives'. Collectives are groups that work together, usually made up of former players, university fans, and companies, to make money so college athletes can get paid for their name, image, and likeness. These groups collect different amounts of money, but people think they make a lot. For example, in 2022, TigerImpact—a group helping Clemson athletes—raised $3.95 million and used $2.4 million to pay athletes for their NIL rights. Texas athletes were paid more than $15 million from collectives in the first two years of NIL. It is estimated that in the first year of NIL, NCAA athletes earned around $917 million, and now NIL deals are worth more than a billion dollars each year (Meares et al., 2024).

Colleges now have to compete in the NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) area too. They are spending money to build better recruiting systems to bring in top players. This new NIL environment allows lesser-known programs to gain national attention, while strong teams can maintain their advantage if they move quickly. Ohio State football, a well-known top team, used their success and reputation to receive NIL money and used those resources to bring top players back to

college instead of going to the NFL. Athletic director Ross Bjork said Ohio State spent 'around $20 million dollars' on their 2024 team through NIL groups and brand partners (Brown, 2025). Although the U.S. approach emphasizes financial autonomy and commercialization, other models have opted to prioritize institutional acknowledgment and academic adaptability for elite athletes.

5.1.2 Elite Athletes in France

Unlike the U.S. model, which places greater focus on financial independence and commercial collaborations via NIL, the French system adopts a more institutional and educational framework for supporting athletes. The Elite Athlete status embodies this model, emphasizing academic adaptability, training assistance, and formal acknowledgment instead of direct financial rewards.

The student-athlete at an elite level should be registered on the ministerial list and recognized by the Ministry of Sports as well as by sports federations, the elite athlete status is taken into account by higher education institutions. Institutions can also extend this recognition to other students engaged in high-level sports practice. Elite student-athletes are granted a special status based on their competitive standing and academic situation. To qualify, they must be registered on the ministerial lists in the categories of Elite, Senior, Emerging Talent, and Transition—or be identified as promising athletes and on the list of athletes in national teams. Furthermore, they must be registered in initial training or continuing education within a higher education institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. Institutions can extend this recognition to other student-athletes (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation, 2024).

Training and knowledge control arrangements vary by institution. The athlete can benefit from flexibility in the organization of training time, personalized human support, access to adapted educational content, specific tools and resources, and easier access to facilities. Specific additional

support may be provided to assist with accommodation, dietary monitoring, and medical control for enrolled athletes, the provision of sports facilities, and the loan of equipment. It is worth noting that higher education institutions may choose to implement a system for validating the skills acquired by elite student-athletes (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation, 2024).

Special status for French university athletes: In total, for this 31st edition of the World University Summer Games, 5,000 athletes from 115 different countries competed. For France, the athletes who participated in these university games were all students benefiting from the Elite Athletes status (SHN). This status offers them the possibility, as specified by the ministry, to 'pursue their studies in higher education while benefiting from adjustments to their schedules to keep pace with training and local, national, or international competitions'. High-level sport, the French Ministry of Sports explains, 'contributes to the country's influence and the promotion of the values of sport'. However, not all sports disciplines benefit from this status. It is necessary for the Ministry of Sports to establish a list of sports recognized as high-level, mainly disciplines that are included in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. To date, 161 disciplines are defined as 'high-level sports', encompassing both summer and winter sports (Campus France, n.d.).

In addition to financial and institutional backing, a crucial element of university athletics pertains to the management of athletic training. An analyzsis of training frequency in the NCAA, FSUL, and French universities in the FFSU shows the different ways each system organizes athletic commitment alongside academic settings.

5.1.3 Training Frequency in the NCAA

The 2019 NCAA GOALS study indicates that student-athletes in all divisions spend a significant amount of time each week on athletics. The research indicates that Division I student-

athletes dedicate a median of roughly 33 hours weekly to athletic endeavors, whereas Division II athletes commit about 31 hours per week and Division III athletes engage in approximately 28 hours weekly o comparable responsibilities. These activities encompass practices, competitions, strength and conditioning workouts, film analysis, and other training duties related to the team.

In addition, according to the 2015 student-athlete suvey conducted by the NCAA, besides weekly training obligations, the amount of time dedicated to athletics rises substantially on days of competition. The report shows that Division I student-athletes usually spend around four to nine hours on their sport during one game day. This figure includes pre-game preparation, travel, the event itself, and post-game duties.

Furthermore, the level of athletic engagement is not limited to the competition period. The report indicates that a considerable share of student-athletes sustains comparable or even increased levels of athletic activity in the offseason. In particular, 67% of Division I athletes, 63% of Division II athletes, and 47% of Division III athletes indicated they devote as much or more time to athletics outside the competition season than they do during active competition (NCAA, 2019, as cited in NCAA, 2025).

To illustrate this further, the NCAA indicates that athletes in Division I commit, on average, 40–50 hours each week exclusively to their sport. This does not include academic duties, travel duration, and additional responsibilities. To provide context, this time investment is comparable to that of a full-time job, alongside the additional challenge of sustaining academic eligibility and achievement. The following outlines the average weekly time distribution for a standard Division I college athlete:

During a regular week, athletes commit around 20–30 hours to their training, encompassing practice sessions and conditioning activities. Competition, along with travel time, contributes an additional 10–15 hours. Team meetings and film analysis take approximately 3–5 hours, whereas recovery and rehabilitation tasks, including physical therapy, active recovery, or mobility exercises, contribute an additional 2–4 hours weekly. In total, these endeavors result in a total weekly athletic commitment of 40–50 hours. The length and intensity of practice sessions differ greatly depending on the sport and the pre-competition phase. Sessions may last between 2 to 4 hours, including skill enhancement, tactical exercises, and practice game situations. Coaches now utilize video analysis tools to offer athletes immediate feedback on their technique and performance (California Learning Resource Network, 2025).

Although the NCAA functions within a centralized and highly professional system, the structure of university athletics in France adopts a more decentralized approach with multiple institutional participants. FFSU partners with institutions such as Ministere de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, Agence Nationale du Sport (ANS), and Ministère des sports, de la jeunesse et de la vie associative (FFSU, n.d.).

In the French university sports system, different organizations collaborate, each having a specific role in setting up, running, and supporting sports activities at the university level. Each university has a SUAPS, located within the institution, which offers students a general education in physical and sports education, and organizes and supervises physical and sports activities. Elite or specialized higher education institutions in France have sports services that aim to achieve the same objectives as the SUAPS. The Sports associations (SA) present on university campuses, complement the activities of the SUAPS by ensuring training and transportation for teams in team sports and individual sports. The French University Sports Federation (FFSU) federates the Sports

Associations and, together with the Regional Committees for university sports (CRSU), oversees the organization of university sports competitions. Finally, the National Union of University Clubs (UNCU) promotes sports activities and is open to all categories and age groups of the population, in respect of the ethics and values upheld by the university (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation, 2024).

5.1.4 Training Frequency in French Universities

Unlike the organized and lengthy training regimens seen in the NCAA, the frequency and arrangement of training at French universities differ significantly based on available resources and the extent of sports programs. As part of this research, many SUAPS offices at French universities were contacted to obtain similar data. However, some institutions declined to share the information, stating it was confidential, while others did not respond at all.

For example, the SUAPS at Université Jean Monnet Saint-Étienne indicates that the institution has a fairly small sports association and does not define official training times for its competitive university squads. Saint-Étienne is connected to the University of Lyon, and its elite athletes are frequently assigned to Lyon's teams to take part in the Championnat de France Universitaire (CFU). At the same time, at the Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès, Mr. Yannick Kinoo, director of SUAPS, reports that 40 hours of training are provided each week for different sports levels, catering to both novice and elite athletes. The hours are allocated across nine sports—rugby, volleyball, football, futsal, basketball, handball, badminton, boxing, and judo—averaging 4 to 5 hours of training per sport, although this may vary depending on the sport and competitive level. In comparison, the Université d'Angers encounters major logistical challenges. According to Richard Garnier, director of SUAPS, the unavailability of facilities hinders the scheduling of specific training sessions for the French University Sports Federation teams, since the university's sports

facilities are completely booked for standard academic classes. A similar situation is happening at the University of Limoges. According to Mr. Benoît Garapon, an administrative and sports assistant for the Nouvelle-Aquitaine University Sports League, limited resources prevent university teams from dedicating sufficient time to preparation. As a result, they train for only about 30 minutes to one hour per week before competitions.

5.1.5 Training Frequency in Lebanese Universities

Turning to the Lebanese universities, according to sports directors of the FSUL member universities, the majority of student-athletes in Lebanese universities train about two days per week, and each training session usually lasts around an hour and a half, resulting in a total of three hours of training per week. In summary, training frequency varies significantly between the three systems. NCAA athletes train the most, often comparable to a full-time commitment. In contrast, in French universities, training depends largely on institutional resources, and it is usually not as often. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, student-athletes train about two times a week, indicating more limited but growing support for sports in universities.

In summary, university teams in the U.S. require substantial dedication to training, similar to professional sports, showing that university training is central to developing elite athletes. In France, training at universities is largely a recreational activity for students, but universities offer flexible schedules and support for elite athletes who are training with their clubs. In Lebanon, universities provide additional competitions that hold significant value for athletes, considering the absence of a structured elite sports system in the country. Additionally, some private universities offer scholarships, which are considered important incentives for student-athletes.

5.1.6 Sports Budget Between American, French, and Lebanese Universities

The sporting activity of the Centre régional des œuvres universitaires et scolaires (Crous) and the FFSU: Sports in the network of university and school organizations. Among its various missions, the network of university services works to improve student living conditions by providing support in areas such as assistance with studies and their funding, food services, accommodation, healthcare, mobility, cultural activities, sports participation, and support for student-led projects. To date, the Crous network has allocated approximately 11% of its CVEC (Contribution to Student Life and Campus) income towards sports-related expenses, which totaled 2.2 million euros in 2022. This funding covers a range of sports-related activities, including equipment for sports facilities within university residences, outdoor sports gear and installations like ping-pong tables, fitness classes, and multi-purpose sports fields, as well as sports coaching, organized activities, and participation in events such as sports evenings, para-sports events, and introductions to different sports and practices. When the Crous contributes to sports-related activities, it is usually to help universities manage facilities or services for student life, not to fund training or competition for athletes, as there is no direct financial support for student-athletes in French universities (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024).

The Crous promotes sports activities by offering financial assistance for facilities and services that improve student life, rather than focusing on training or supporting competitive university athletes. For example, a CVEC budget of €0.1 million was allocated to develop a multi-sports field at a university residence in Metz, accessible to all students and hosting sporting events. The Crous offers complimentary sports classes, such as fitness workshops at the Crous of Reims, and hosts numerous sports events, including an inter-residence football competition and the National Day for Sport and Disability by the Crous of Nice-Toulon. Moreover, certain residences provide

complimentary access to sports gear, like at the Montebello residence in Nice (Cour des comptes, 2025). These examples clearly demonstrate that the French system funds recreational and student-life sports services, yet it does not allocate resources to university sports teams or competitive collegiate athletes.

There is a performance and objectives agreement currently active between the French University Sport Federation (FFSU) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, covering the years 2022 to 2024. This agreement outlines four main objectives: first, to organize and promote university sports competitions at all levels; second, to promote and develop university sports activities in various forms within the associative framework and to broaden the audience it serves; third, to promote and enhance France's standing in international university sports; and fourth, to focus on cross-cutting goals. In 2024, the FFSU received funding of 5.6 million euros, which is intended to manage and develop university sports competitions at the national and international levels. These funds come from the Ministry of Sports to support operational costs, coordination, and the promotion of student sports, rather than to finance athletes. Additionally, the FFSU has access to financial support and benefits from the involvement of a representative from the Ministry of Sports who carries out specific missions on its behalf (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024).

5.1.7 Financing University Sports Through CVEC Revenue

The Contribution for Student and Campus Life (CVEC), set up in March 2018, is one of the key parts of the ‘student plan’ introduced in October 2017. Its aim is to support students succeed by offering better support and improving their living conditions. This system provides additonal resources annually for services that support students, including cultural and sporting activities, encouraging student-led projects, and promoting health initiatives. The CVEC is an important

tool for funding new sports facilities and resources. In 2022, 14% of the funds went to sports, including building or repairing sports facilities, buying educational materials, organizing sports courses, and subsidizing licenses, among other initiatives. As for sports facilities, there are ongoing projects with the National Sports Agency and local authorities to better use existing sports infrastructure, which is not always fully utilized. These efforts support the plan to provide 5,000 pieces of sports equipment (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024). Nonetheless, the CVEC does not provide funding for FFSU sports competitions since its aim is to support services related to student life instead of competitive university athletics. Although the CVEC contributes to the sports budget of French universities, it does not provide financial assistance to university sports teams or competitive student-athletes.

5.1.8 Defining and Implementing a Strategy to Promote Sports Participation Among Students

The most recent report from Association Nationale des Étudiants en Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives (ANESTAPS) on student sports participation highlights a decline in physical and sports activities among students, along with a lack of awareness regarding the sports opportunities available at educational institutions. Currently, 34% of students are involved in some form of sports activity. The upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris 2024 present a valuable opportunity to reinvigorate student sports engagement and encourage greater involvement from the student population in organizing these events. Reports from France Universités and Stéphane Braconnier, president of the University of Assas Panthéon, as well as from IGESR, support this finding and provide several recommendations to increase sports participation among students. In line with this, a strategic plan to promote student sports was formally signed on April 7, 2023, by the two ministries (ESR and Sports) and the three institutional conferences (FU, CDEFI, CGE). The plan is centered around three key areas:

• The first focus is on expanding sports opportunities for students, especially by improving ‘health and wellness’ programs offered through sports services, to attract those who are least active. Encouraging free-access sports sessions, which are more flexible to accommodate students' busy schedules, is also emphasized. Finally, forming partnerships with sports federations and affiliated clubs is proposed as a way to offer students a broader range of activities beyond what is available on campus (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024).

• Second axis: the enhancement of practice and the organization of university time: respecting the autonomy of institutions, the roadmap emphasizes that it is possible to award ECTS credits to encourage sports practice, as well as optional Teaching Units (EU) in curricula. More broadly, institutions must address the issue of very demanding university rhythms, which negatively impact sports practice. Finally, institutions are encouraged to organize regular university competitions on their campuses, in connection with the FFSU (French University Sports Federation), which strengthen social bonds and team spirit among their students and enhance the institution's reputation at the national level (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024).

• Third axis: strengthening the resources and governance of sports in higher education. The French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR) calls on higher education institutions to make strategic use of the designated tax, the Contribution to Student Life and Campus (CVEC), and to ensure that a portion of the public service funding grant (SCSP) related to student life is mobilized for the purpose of enhancing physical and sports practice. It also aims to encourage co-funding with sports federations, local authorities, and the National Sports Agency to promote the sharing of facilities; to develop an ‘active campus’ plan based on active design principles; to strengthen the competence of sports councils, to create unique sports referents for each institution, and to reinforce the role of student sports in the work of the sports movement, including the Regional

Sports Conferences of the ANS (Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques, 2024).

5.1.9 FFSU Fees (License)

The cost of a sports license in French universities through the FFSU includes several components. The national part is fixed at €22.50 and is the same for everyone. This funding supports the federation operate, organize competitions, develop university sports, and support regional leagues and sports associations (AS). Each regional league also adds its own part, which helps with organizing events, handling logistics, and supporting the AS in the region. The license also covers insurance costs. This includes civil liability insurance, which is usually €1.88 under the FFSU-MAIF (Mutuelle d'Assurance des Instituteurs de France) contract, or a different amount if the AS has their own insurance. There is also optional individual accident insurance for €1.09 if you choose to add it through MAIF FFSU. Licenses for roles like coach, manager, referee, or promotional are free, though insurance might be required depending on local rules. These roles do not incur national or regional fees. The total cost, which includes the national, regional, and insurance parts, is collected by the AS. They then send the national part to the federation through the regional league. The AS may also add a voluntary contribution to cover things like competition fees or travel costs, and they keep all of that money. Some universities choose to help pay for the FFSU license for their students. Additionally, the government's 'Pass'Sport' program provides eligible scholarship students €70 to help cover part or all of the AS membership and license cost. This money is provided to students in late August and must be used at the beginning of the season (FFSU, n.d.).

5.1.10 Sports Budget: French Universities

When looking at how university sports are funded, a major issue is the lack of transparent budget details from SUAPS offices. This is because many universities either kept the data confidential or did not provide a response at all. Although the number of responses was limited, the budgets from three universities provide a useful foundation for understanding how SUAPS offices distribute resources and handle their financial activities.

According to Christine Richard, who is in charge of administrative and financial matters at SUAPS Bordeaux, states that the sports budget at the Université de Bordeaux is at least €3.4 million. This includes €2.7 million that SUAPS manages directly for running and maintaining the 28 hectares and 13,500 m² of sports facilities. This funding covers items such as logistics, administrative staff salaries, maintenance of the facilities, utilities, and buying equipment.

In contrast, at Aix-Marseille Université, approximately €444,599 was allocated to student sports in 2022 through CVEC funding. Of this, €303,799 supported SUAPS activities such as general fitness and sports programs, and €140,800 was provided to AS AMU, the university's competitive sports group. In 2023, the total increased slightly to €452,439, with SUAPS funding staying the same, but AS AMU received more, €148,640. However, these numbers only cover activities funded by CVEC and don't include other costs like facility upkeep, SUAPS staff salaries, or local partnerships, meaning the actual total sports budget is significantly higher (Aix-Marseille Université, Commission CVEC, 2022).

Another example is the Université Toulouse–Jean Jaurès, which allocates approximately €1.99 million annually on sports. According to Yannick Kinoo, the director of SUAPS UT2, this includes €140,000 program operations, like renting equipment and facilities, €1.1 million for 11 permanent teaching staff, and €350,000 for five administrative staff. Another €400,000 comes

from CVEC, which is used for teaching staff salaries (€260,000), student staff salaries (€40,000), and extra operating costs (€100,000).

5.1.11 Sports Budget: Lebanese Universities

Transitioning to the Lebanese context, among the 26 member universities of the FSUL, 10 provided information about their sports budgets. Of the remaining institutions, three reported no sports budget was allocated, while 13 declined to provide specific figures or ranges because of confidentiality issues.

Table 29: *Sports Budgets of Lebanese Universities*

Lebanese Universities	Sports Budget Value (USD)
1. Antonine University (UA)	30,000–55,000
2. American University of Technology (AUT)	7,000–10,000
3. Rafik Hariri University (RHU)	15,000–25,000
4. Arab Open University (AOU)	≈ 50,000
5. Al Maaref University (MU)	≈ 30,000
6. AZM university (AZM)	≈ 5,000
7. Islamic University of Lebanon (IUL)	10,000–15,000
8. City University (CityU)	45,000
9. Beirut Arab University (BAU)	80,000–100,000
10. Haigazian University (HU)	10,000

The numbers show significant differences in how universities spend money, with some spending as little as $5,000 a year and others spending almost $100,000. Even though the amounts vary a lot from one university to another, they still provide a general idea of the small but growing support for sports in Lebanese universities. Interviews with sports directors indicate that 81.81% of FSUL member universities provide sports scholarships. The range of these percentages varies between 0% and 100%, with the two most frequent ranges being 10% to 20% and 10% to 50%. Notably, two Lebanese universities offer up to 100% sports scholarships to their student-athletes.

Additionally, the fact that more than half of the FSUL member universities did not provide data shows how hard it is to receive clear and accurate information about budgets and spending in this area.

5.1.12 Sports Budget: American Universities

Revenue categories include numerous primary sources of income for sports departments. To begin with, ticket sales refer to money made from selling tickets to people who attend athletic events, covering tickets sold to the general public, faculty, and students, as well as handling and distributing fees, but excluding any amount above the ticket price such as special seating fees. In addition, contributions consist of money provided directly to support the athletic program by individuals, companies, groups, foundations, clubs, or other organizations, and include not only cash but also donations in kind such as vehicles or equipment, as well as special seating payments. Moreover, rights and licensing cover money from radio and TV broadcasts, internet and online sales rights, and deals made by the school, the NCAA, or conferences, along with corporate sponsorships, licensing deals, selling ads, trademarks, and royalties, and the value of products or goods provided through sponsorships such as clothing, drinks, and equipment. This category also in-

cludes revenue from food, concessions, and parking. Furthermore, Student fees are amounts collected from students to help fund the athletic department. Similarly, school funds consist of direct and indirect financial support from the university, including state money, tuition, and tuition waivers, as well as federal Work Study payments for student workers. It also covers distribution from the state, city, or federal government, as well as the value of university provided services like administrative assistance, buildings, maintenance, security, risk management, utilities, depreciation, and unpaid debt obligations. Finally, other revenues include funds that the athletic department returns to the university, as required under the 2015 NCAA reporting rule, and all other sources of income such as game guarantees, earnings from special events like bowl games, third-party support guaranteed by the institution, housing allowances, sports camps, and income from restricted endowments and investments used to fund the athletic department during the reporting year (USA TODAY, 2024)

On the other hand, the expense categories in university sports can be split into multiple main areas. To begin with, coaching and staff expenses include all salaries, bonuses, and benefits listed on the university's tax forms for coaches and staff, plus any money provided to coaches and staff from other groups that the university promises to cover. In addition, scholarships represent financial assistance provided to student-athletes for sports-related purposes, including summer school costs, tuition reductions, and waivers. This category also covers support for athletes who are no longer eligible to compete or who are inactive due to health issues, as well financial aid for non-athletes like student managers. Moreover, facilities and overhead costs cover debts, including internal loan programs along with facility maintenance, utilities, and rental fees. They also include administrative or overhead allocated by the university to the Athletics Department. Finally, other expenses comprise a range of costs such as payments to other universities as game guarantees,

school specific expenses for bowl games (excluding football coach bonuses), severance pay for former coaches and staff, recruiting and travel costs, and spending on team equipment and uniforms. Furthermore, this category covers expenses for game days and camps, fundraising, marketing, spirit group support, medical expenses and insurance, conference membership fees, and the value of university-provided services—such as maintenance, security, risk management—that are not directly billed to the sports department. Starting in 2016, this category also consists of meals and snacks provided to athletes beyond standard meal plans or travel allowances.

Based on the latest data from USA TODAY, updated on March 14, 2024, the following table presents the top 20 universities ranked by their total revenue and expenses, measured in millions of US dollars, for the fiscal year 2023–2024 (USA TODAY, 2024).

Table 30*:* *Top 20 NCAA Division I Universities Based on Total Athletic Revenue and Expenses*

Rank	University	Conference	Total Revenue (In Millions of U.S. Dollars)	Total Expenses (In Millions of U.S. Dollars)
1	Ohio State	Big 10	251.62	225.73
2	Texas	Big 12	239.29	225.15
3	Alabama	SEC	214.37	195.88
4	Michigan	Big 10	210.65	193.55
5	Georgia	SEC	203.05	169.02
6	LSU	SEC	199.31	192.77
7	Texas A&M	SEC	193.14	177.67
8	Florida	SEC	190.42	174.36
9	Penn State	Big 10	181.23	170.54
10	Oklahoma	Big 12	177.32	175.99
11	Auburn	SEC	174.57	151.59
12	Michigan State	Big 10	172.80	156.44
13	Indiana	Big 10	166.76	132.39
14	Virginia	ACC	161.92	150.58
15	Florida State	ACC	161.14	150.77
16	Kentucky	SEC	159.08	153.62

Rank	University	Conference	Total Revenue (In Millions of U.S. Dollars)	Total Expenses (In Millions of U.S. Dollars)
17	Clemson	ACC	158.28	143.35
18	Tennessee	SEC	154.57	157.10
19	Oregon	Pac-12	153.51	140.56
20	Arkansas	SEC	152.51	144.31

Note. Data adapted from USA TODAY Finance Database, by USA TODAY, 2024. Revenue and expenses are measured in millions of U.S. dollars.

The data indicates that the largest college athletic programs bring in significant amounts of revenue, typically between about $152 million and $252 million each year. Ohio State, Texas, and Alabama are at the top of the list. Although most of these programs have more income than expenses, some, like Tennessee, spend slightly more than they earn, showing that even among the top programs, financial situations can vary. The numbers also show that high-revenue athletic programs are mainly found in the Power Five conferences, especially the SEC and Big Ten.

To put these numbers into perspective, the Big Ten Conference is one of the top 10 biggest sports leagues globally when it comes to media rights value, and it is worth approximately the same as Italy's Serie A and Germany's Bundesliga. Some college athletic programs make as much money as top European football clubs. For example, the University of Texas made more than $330 million in operating revenue in 2024. Student-athletes can now share in that revenue, due to new regulations that allow colleges to distribute up to $20.5 million (Sport Business, 2025).

In summary, the data indicates that university sports budgets differ considerably among the three countries. French universities primarily receive funding from public sources like the CVEC and FFSU, which support sports infrastructure, programs, and student involvement. Lebanese universities report lower budgets, typically between $5,000 and $100,000, with some institutions omitting figures due to confidentiality. American universities, according to USA TODAY data,

have much higher financial figures, with total revenues and expenses reaching into the hundreds of millions of dollars. These findings highlight the varying levels of financial capacity and funding mechanisms across French, Lebanese, and American universities.

The comparative analysis of the university sports systems in America, France, and Lebanon reveals three separate structural logics influenced by financial resources, institutional framework, and the significance of sport in each nation. The North American model functions in a highly commercialized setting, featuring budgets and media exposure akin to professional European sports, particularly after the 2024 policy revisions permitting student-athletes to earn direct compensation. Also, university sport in North America is the core of elite and professional sport, that acts as a feeder for the Olympics and top professional leagues in the country. In comparison, university sports in France are recreational, amateur, and educational, with elite and professional routes mainly established through club systems instead of universities. The Lebanese system, predominantly amateur with some elements of semi-professionalism, exhibits hybrid traits because of sports scholarships available at various universities. In Lebanon, elite sport is significantly less developed than in France and North America, and the availability of scholarship programs enables university athletics to serve as a motivational tool for gifted athletes, possibly enhancing the overall quality of elite sports in the country. Overall, the considerably larger budgets—primarily influenced by media rights—in the United States enable substantial scholarships, luxurious sports facilities, high coaching salaries, and enhanced athlete compensation, leading to a framework that operates much like a professional sports organization.

5.2 A Particular Case of the Lebanese University Sport Model: Saint Joseph University

In 2015, USJ established 'Club 1875'—named after the university's establishment year—to support student-athletes and allow them to continue competing after graduation. The reasons for creating the club stem from the partnership between USJ university teams and Club 1875, which is designed to help student-athletes better connect, enabling them to compete both with the university team and Club 1875. This collaboration creates opportunities to compete at the university (FSUL) and national levels, enabling athletes and coaches to work together more closely and become better prepared for major competitions. To maintain this teamwork, students who do not join Club 1875 are not permitted to play with the USJ varsity team in the FSUL, since participating in one program helps players and coaches develop stronger cohesion. For graduates, the program allows them to continue competing after graduation through Club 1875, which supports their development and enables them to share their knowledge and skills with younger athletes.

According to Mr. Maroun El Khoury, the student-athletes who compete with both the USJ varsity teams in the FSUL and Club 1875 follow structured weekly training loads: for futsal and basketball men, they train four sessions per week, each lasting around 1h30–2 hours, while for volleyball men and women and futsal women, they train three sessions per week of similar duration. USJ also provides scholarships and ensures regular participation in university competitions. This strategy has enabled USJ to become FSUL champion for four consecutive years (2021–2022, 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025) since the FSUL re-launched its league.

At the national level, USJ Club 1875 has a significant presence in various sports. In badminton, the club reliably earns medals and supplies 70% of the national squad. In swimming, competitors consistently reach the podium. In water polo, USJ secured a 3rd-place result. In squash, the women's teams are national title holders. In volleyball, the men's team competes in Division 2 and

the women's in Division 1. In futsal, the women are national champion, while the men's team plays in Division 1. In basketball, the women compete in Division 2 and the men in Division 3. Both handball teams, men and women participate in the sport's Division 1. In table tennis, the men compete in Division 2, while the women consistently win medals in age-group events. Although this strategy provides students with financial support through scholarships and access to regular competitions, the training and competitive load remain insufficient compared to what U.S. universities offer for elite sport, and also fall short of the training volume provided by elite sport associations in France. The USJ sports strategy is highly relevant for the development of sport in Lebanon, both nationally and at the university level, but it does not have a significant impact on Lebanon's results in international competitions. The case of USJ, a French-system university, reflects the particularities and opportunities of the Lebanese university sports model: it has far greater influence on the development of local sport than French universities, yet far less than U.S. universities.

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the key results are compiled, their importance is analyzed concerning the broader context, and possible pathways for future studies are suggested. This doctoral study aimed to investigate the composition, characteristics, and fundamental dynamics of the university sports system in Lebanon, intending to place it within a wider global context.

Part I set the groundwork for the study by exploring important theories about sports organizations. It explained how national sports federations work and impact sports, how non-profit associations change in response to external pressures using mimetic practices, and how sociology helps understand how organizations behave and become more professional. This framework serves as the basis for analyzing sports in Lebanon in later stages.

The study was motivated by three main research questions, each addressing a crucial element of the overarching investigation. The initial question was: In what manner is the university sports system in Lebanon structured? This foundational question sought to uncover the administrative, institutional, and historical factors shaping the current state of university sports in Lebanon. Part II enabled us to address this research question, which includes Chapter 2, focusing on the Lebanese sports structure, including the FSUL's position within it. Meanwhile, Chapter 3 discusses the history of university sports in Lebanon. Furthermore, by utilizing interviews and questionnaires, the study examined the governance and history of sports at the university level, as well as the establishment of the FSUL.

The second research question aimed to provide a comparative viewpoint: What distinctions exist between the North American and French sports models? These two models were chosen because of their substantial impact on worldwide sports systems and their differing frameworks. Additionally, Chapter 4 in Part II provides an in-depth explanation of French and American influences on Lebanese educational institutions, including their impact on Lebanon's linguistic landscape. This historical background illustrates the political and educational relationships between France, the U.S., and Lebanon. The North American model typically focuses on commercialization, competitive success, and university independence, whereas the French model is more centralized, featuring increased government supervision and a stronger focus on sport as a public service. This comparative study provided a framework for examining elite sports in both countries and better understanding the sports models applied in their universities.

The final research question developed from this comparative aspect by inquiring: Which of these two sports models is most closely associated with the university sports system in Lebanon? This research question was answered mainly in Part III after analyzing the results of the questionnaires directed to the student-athletes and sports directors of the FSUL members. Additionally, it was mainly explored in Chapter 3: Placement of the Lebanese Universities Sports Model Between the French and U.S. University Sports Models. The analysis indicated that the Lebanese university sports system is presently more aligned with the French model regarding governance and overall structure, yet new practices like sports scholarships suggest a gradual transition toward a hybrid model that includes aspects of the U.S. system. This question is crucial for understanding the identity and direction of Lebanese universities within the FSUL—whether they tend to imitate one model over another or whether they represent a hybrid or completely distinct approach.

This thesis offers several significant contributions to the comprehension of university sports systems, particularly emphasizing the Lebanese context. First, it provides a comprehensive examination of the Lebanese university sports framework—an area largely overlooked in scholarly literature. By thoroughly examining institutional practices, governance frameworks, and cultural factors, the study delineates the key features of the Lebanese model, positioning it as a unique hybrid influenced by both French and American elements. Utilizing information collected from questionnaires sent to student-athletes and sports directors and interviews with prominent figures in Lebanese sports, this study has provided an in-depth examination of the existing condition of university sports in Lebanon, focusing specifically on the function of the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL). The findings suggest that university sports in Lebanon mainly adhere to the French model, exhibiting minimal institutional participation and structural resemblances to frameworks like the FFSU and FSUL. Lebanese universities are not the primary driving force behind athlete development. Rather, sports clubs continue to be the primary venue for developing elite athletes, both in terms of facilities and athlete advancement. Lebanese universities often assume a secondary, supportive position—acting more as facilitators than active participants. In this context, the system is more in line with the French model, where sports are primarily extracurricular activities, and athlete growth takes place outside the university framework. Nevertheless, some Lebanese universities, particularly those influenced by the American educational model, have begun implementing practices such as sports scholarships. Although these instances remain few and isolated, they introduce aspects not commonly perceived in the French model. This gradual change indicates the emergence of a hybrid model, merging characteristics of both French and American systems, and implies a gradual yet potential transition towards a more dynamic and student-athlete-focused framework in Lebanese higher education.

The validity of the second hypothesis which posits that sports models are shaped by power dynamics and strategic interests, becomes evident when examining how institutions balance their historical identities with modern market pressures. A clear example is Université Saint-Joseph (USJ). Despite its deep French educational roots (Bertelsen, 2018), USJ has made a deliberate choice to adopt American-style sports scholarships to strengthen its competitive position. The analysis of the questionnaires completed by student-athletes and sports directors confirms this; the data suggests that these scholarships act as a mechanism for recruiting talent and securing student loyalty in a crowded educational landscape.

This shift represents a classic 'game of interest'. In this context, the need for institutional survival and market dominance outweighs traditional heritage. Viewed through the lens of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), this is a case of strategic isomorphism. The university does not simply copy a foreign model by accident; it 'mimics' the athletic scholarship system because it provides the symbolic and competitive capital needed to lead the local sports scene. Furthermore, this highlights a top-down power relation (Weber, 1968), where the central administration chooses to deploy these international models to pursue prestige, even when such strategies deviate from the institution's historical French framework. Ultimately, the 'Hybrid Model' is not a passive inheritance, but a social construct actively shaped by the internal power plays and strategic interests of the key actors involved.

As with any research, this study has specific limitations, particularly regarding the data collection process. The decision to employ questionnaires and interviews, although suitable for investigating the experiences and views of student-athletes and sports directors, inevitably comes with limitations. In educational research, utilizing a questionnaire for data collection is typically

straightforward to handle. No trained interviewer is necessary. However, this benefit of questionnaires may become a drawback if there is no one available to clarify items in the questionnaire that seem unclear to the participants. Researchers must create questionnaire items by clearly articulating them in straightforward language to avoid any confusion (Aksu, 2009). The effectiveness of every interview relies on the interviewer's abilities and the respondent's willingness. In educational studies, researchers, including students and assistants, must conduct their own interviews due to budget constraints. The majority of them lack training and possess little to no interview experience, which impacts the quality of the interviews (Mckernan, 1996).

A notably important factor in the data collection process was the differing levels of participation among FSUL member institutions. Of the 27 universities reached contacted, 24 responded with information from their student-athletes, leaving only three institutions that did not provide data. Likewise, interviews with sports directors received positive responses, with 22 of the 27 involved. This relatively high level of participation provided a strong foundation for the study; however, it remains important to acknowledge that the perspectives of a few institutions and their representatives are absent. Although this does not greatly affect the overall validity of the results, these gaps may have led to the underrepresentation of certain institutional contexts or distinct student-athlete experiences. Although the insights obtained are significant, they must be understood with an awareness of these limitations. Future studies would benefit from enhanced institutional collaboration and more effective stakeholder engagement to achieve a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Moreover, in trying to compare the sports budgets of universities in Lebanon and France, the research encountered considerable data access challenges. In French universities, most SUAPS

offices either failed to respond or stated that budgetary details were confidential and could not be revealed. A comparable scenario took place in Lebanon, as many universities refused to supply the requested financial information, stating confidentiality concerns. Additionally, when attempting to compare the training session numbers for student-athletes among the three countries, similar limitations emerged: most French SUAPS offices did not respond, and others deemed the information as confidential. Thus, a thorough comparative examination of university sports budgets and training schedules across the three countries could not be fully carried out.

Beyond these methodological constraints, there were also limitations to the data regarding institutional power dynamics. While the findings clearly point to the existence of strategic 'games of interest', the study was unable to access the confidential boardroom discussions where these power relations are officially decided. This reality makes it difficult to fully confirm the second hypothesis. While the move toward scholarships is a clear and visible shift, the real motives and debates behind these choices usually happen behind closed doors. Since these administrative discussions are private, the study had to focus on the results of those decisions rather than the private conversations themselves. As a result, the analysis of these power relations is based on the outcomes of those decisions rather than the process of their formulation. Furthermore, the severe Lebanese economic crisis acts as a complicating factor, making it difficult to fully separate strategic positioning from mere institutional survival. Lastly, while this thesis focuses on the institutional level, future research must examine how macro-level sectarian politics continue to shape, or perhaps restrict, the adoption of foreign sports models in Lebanon.

Building on the findings of this research, several avenues for future investigation emerge. A comparative analysis between the two university sports federations—FSUL and FFSU—and the

NCAA could offer deeper insights into the governance structures, decision-making processes, and operational frameworks that define each context. Such a study would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural, political, and institutional factors influence the administration of university sports across different countries. Moreover, a broader comparison involving universities in Lebanon, France, and the United States could help better position Lebanese institutions within the international landscape. This would not only reveal key similarities and divergences in organizational models but also identify best practices and areas for improvement. To enrich this comparative approach, conducting interviews and questionnaires with student-athletes from the United States and students engaged in university sports in France could provide valuable qualitative data. Their perspectives would shed light on lived experiences, institutional support systems, and perceptions of sport within the academic environment—elements that are often difficult to capture through institutional analysis alone.

By integrating both structural comparisons and firsthand student perspectives, future research could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of university sports governance, while also offering practical insights for policy development and institutional reform in the Lebanese context.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Questionnaire for Student-Athletes (Form A)

This questionnaire was utilized to evaluate the sports level in different types of sports and to acknowledge the differences between French and North American sports models regarding scholarships and university vision.

Student-athlete's name:

Gender:

Age:

University:

Varsity team:

1. How many days per week do you practice with the varsity team? How many hours per week?
2. Does your university present sports scholarships?
3. What are the criteria to gain sports scholarships in your specific sport?
4. What is your duty, as a student-athlete, after receiving sports scholarships?
5. What are the conditions for maintaining the sports scholarships?
6. Is your university a member of the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL)?
7. If yes, do you participate in tournaments organized by the Lebanese Federation of University Sport (FSUL)?
8. Does your university participate in regional tournaments (outside of Lebanon)?
9. Does the university possess a sports facility (courts, gym, etc...)?
10. Where do you practice with your varsity team?
11. What are the "sports" reasons that made you choose and represent this specific university?

Annex 2: Interview Guide for Lebanese Student-Athletes from different Lebanese universities (FSUL members)

The objective of this interview is to compare the North American and French sport models to better understand the Lebanese sports model in universities, and to show how it is perceived by student-athletes from different Lebanese universities (FSUL members).

1. Which university are you a member of?
2. How were you recruited or selected to join your current university and its sports program?
3. Were there clear pathways for you to progress from school to university level in Lebanon? How does this compare to what you know about France or North America?
4. How would you describe the quality of coaching and training you receive at your university?
5. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of training conditions and facilities (gyms, fields, training spaces) in Lebanon compared to France or North America?
6. How many hours per week do you dedicate to training, and how is your schedule structured?
7. If you had to choose between sports and education, how would the Lebanese sports system influence your decision?
8. Do you feel Lebanese universities and schools support (financial, medical, academic) student-athletes enough? How does this compare to your knowledge of France or North America?
9. Do you feel FSUL prioritizes athlete development or focuses more on organizational/administrative concerns?

10. How transparent are FSUL rules, selection criteria, and decision-making processes for student-athletes?
11. Do you think FSUL has the potential to become a stronger and more professional federation in Lebanon? What reforms or changes would you suggest?
12. What opportunities exist for Lebanese athletes to reach a professional level in their sport?
13. How often do you compete internationally, and how are these opportunities provided?
14. Do you feel Lebanese athletes are given enough exposure to international scouts, coaches, or professional clubs?
15. Do FSUL competitions help student-athletes transition to national teams or professional clubs?
16. How visible are FSUL competitions within your university and in Lebanese society?
17. Are FSUL events well-promoted and recognized, and what role does media coverage play in shaping their importance?
18. Overall, do you feel the Lebanese sports system provides enough recognition to athletes?
19. Are there any barriers in Lebanon that limit athletes from fully developing their potential?
20. What do you think is the biggest barrier to improving the professionalism of university sports in Lebanon?
21. How do you feel about the level of competition and skill development in Lebanon compared to France or North America?

Annex 3: Questionnaire for Sports Directors

This questionnaire examines the evolution of sports models in Lebanese universities and their contribution to the sports sector at a macro-level.

Sports Director's Name:

University:

1. How many varsity teams are there in your university?
2. Does the university offer sports scholarships? If yes, what are the criteria for offering sports scholarships for student-athletes? (Example: Division1/National team for boys/girls) and what is the amount (%) of the scholarship?
3. Who sets the policies for sports scholarships and who decides its amount in the university?
4. Is there a sports budget in the university? if yes, what is the budget available for sports scholarships?
5. Are the coaches and sports directors required by the universities to meet any target (projected results/rankings)?
6. Is your university doing any scouting for student-athletes in high school?
7. Do you believe that offering sports scholarships will improve the level of sports in Lebanon?
8. How would you rate the level of universities' competitions in Lebanon? And do you believe that it can be improved? If yes, how?
9. What are the aspects that can be developed in the university sports in Lebanon?
10. How many training sessions do your student-athletes train in each sports in the university?
11. Do the student-athletes train outside the university with national top division clubs? If yes, how many sessions do they train with their clubs? Are they getting paid for their training outside the university?

12. Does your university possess sports facilities for the varsity teams to train? Or they rent some sports facilities for specific kinds of sports? or both?
13. Is your university participating in this year's FSUL tournaments? If not, why?
14. Describe the importance of sports in your university.

Annex 4: Interview Guide – Mr. Sami Garabedian

The objective of this interview is to write a chapter about the history of university sport in Lebanon**.**

1. When did the sports universities' movement started in Lebanon?
2. Which universities were the pioneers for this sports movement?
3. Which year was the FSUL founded?
4. How is the structure of the FSUL organized (hierarchy of the federation)?
5. What is the purpose of the federation?
6. How was the FSUL originally created?
7. Which ministry is responsible for the FSUL?
8. Which year was the first time that the FSUL organized universities sports competitions?
9. Which federations or associations is the FSUL a member of?
10. How many universities are members in the FSUL?
11. What are the criteria for a university to be a member of the FSUL?
12. How many kind of sports are there in the FSUL competitions? Is there any strategy to introduce new kind of sports?
13. From where does the federation receive its revenue?
14. In general, what are the consequences/effects for the politico-religious interferences in the FSUL?
15. What is currently the strategy of the FSUL? What are the short/long terms targets of the federation?
16. What are the challenges related to sports and universities that face the FSUL?
17. What can the FSUL improve in the universities' competitions?

18. How many international competitions does Lebanon participate in terms of the collegiate level? (FISU, AUSF etc.)
19. What is the history of the Lebanon's participations' in the international participations? How it all started?
20. What are the achievements done by Lebanon in these competitions?
21. What is the role of the FSUL concerning the participants in the international competitions?
22. What is the process to select a university team to represent Lebanon in the international competitions? Which side select the players and coaches?

Annex 5: Detailed Interviewers Table

The following table provides a comprehensive log of the expert interviews I conducted during my field research. These discussions provided the foundational data for my analysis of the Lebanese sports system.

Name	Position / Affiliation	Date	Purpose of the Interview
Mr. Sami Garabedian	President of the FSUL (2021-2023)	July 2024	Collection of primary data on the early history of the FSUL and the evolution of Lebanese university sports.
Mr. Mohamad Oueidat	Head of Sports Dept. at the Ministry of Youth and Sports (LMYS)	August 2024	Clarification of the FSUL's position within the official Lebanese sports hierarchy and the government's role in oversight.
Mr. Ziad Saadeh	Current President of the FSUL (2024-Present)	October 2024	The focus of this interview was on the current organization of university tournaments and the federation's current objectives.
Mr. Maroun El Khoury	Head of Sports Dept. at USJ; FSUL Secretary	October 2024	Analysis of the University Sports Conference (USC) and how private universities manage their own competitive circuits outside the FSUL.
Mr. Jihad Salameh	Olympic International Lecturer; Sports Figure	January 2025	Mr. Salameh provided an expert overview of the 29 national sports federations and the structure of the Lebanese Olympic Committee.

Mr. Wadih Abdelnour	Lebanese Sports Journalist	September 2025	This interview was used to analyze how the media perceives university sports and why some events lack public visibility in Lebanon.
Prof. Denis Bernardeau-Moreau	Professor of Sports Sociology	February 2025	We discussed the French model, specifically looking at how sports federations manage the balance between professional staff and volunteers.
Dr. Tarek Assaf	Head of PES Committee at the the Center for Educational Research and Development within LMEHE	September 2025	Dr. Assaf explained the legislative efforts to make Physical Education (PES) a core subject in the Lebanese official secondary exams.

Annex 6: Interview Guides for Institutional Stakeholders and Sports Experts

The following questions formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the stakeholders identified in Annex 5. These protocols were tailored to address specific themes regarding the legislative, historical, and operational transitions of university sports in Lebanon.

6.1. Mr. Mohamad Oueidat

1. Could you describe the structure of sports in Lebanon following the various adjustments to national decrees and laws? Specifically, what significant changes have these legislative updates made in regulating the broader sports sector?
2. Within this official national sports structure, where exactly is the FSUL positioned, and how does it interact with the Ministry's hierarchy?

6.2. Mr. Maroun El Khoury

1. What were the primary drivers and objectives behind the initial creation of the University Sports Conference (USC)?
2. Could you explain how the USC era came to an end? What were the specific reasons or challenges that led to its conclusion?
3. How did the transition materialize for the founders of the USC as they moved toward the FSUL? Furthermore, what was the process behind the formation of the new FSUL Executive Board in 2021?

6.3. Mr. Wadih Abdelnour

1. From your perspective, how visible are FSUL competitions in the Lebanese media landscape today?

2. What specific methods or platforms are currently being utilized to broadcast and promote FSUL competitions to the public?

6.4. Mr. Jihad Salameh

1. Currently, how many recognized national sports federations are operating in Lebanon?
2. Out of these, how many sports federations are active members of the Lebanese Olympic Committee (LOC)?
3. Across the federations that are members of the LOC, what is the typical ratio of professional employees to volunteers?
4. How would you describe the current state and effectiveness of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in supporting the national sports ecosystem?

6.5. Mr. Ziad Saadeh

1. What were the core aspirations and vision of the newly elected FSUL board when it took office in 2021?
2. As the current President, what are your primary strategic objectives for the federation during your mandate?

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Glossary

ACC	Atlantic Coast Conference
AD	Anno Domini (Latin for 'In the year of the Lord')
AFC	Asian Football Confederation
AMIDEAST	America-Mideast Educational and Training Services
ANESTAPS	Association Nationale des Étudiants en Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives
ANS	National Sports Agency
AOU	Arab Open University
APSA	Activités Physiques, Sportives et Artistiques
AS AMU	Association Sportive d'Aix-Marseille Université
ASSU	Association du Sport Scolaire et Universitaire
ATEL	Association of Teachers of English in Lebanon
AUL	Arts, Sciences and Technology University
AUSF	Asian University Sports Federation
AUSF	Arab University Sport Federation
AUST	American University of Science and Technology
AUT	American University of Technology
AZM	AZM university
BAU	Beirut Arab University
BCE	Before the Common Era
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CDEFI	Conférence des Directeurs des Écoles Françaises D'ingénieurs
CE	Common Era
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERD	Centre for Education Research and Development
CFU	Championnat de France Universitaire
CGE	Conférence des grandes écoles
CHD	Reinert's Descending Hierarchical Classification

CIE	Confédération Internationale des Étudiants
CITYU	City University
CNDS	National Center for the Development of Sport
CNOSF	French National Olympic and Sports Committee
COJOP	Paris 2024 Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games
CREPS	Regional Centers for Community Education and Sport
CROUS	Centre Régional des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires
CRSU	Comités Régionaux du Sport Universitaire
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CTN	National Technical Advisor
CTS	Sport Technical Advisor
CUSI	Centro Universitario Sportivo Italiano
CVEC	Contribution to Student Life and Campus
DRCS	Regional Directorates for Social Cohesion
DRJSCS	Regional Offices for Youth, Sports, and Social Unity
DTN	National Technical Director
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EN	National Trainer
ENB	Club Enfants de Neptune de Beyrouth
ENE	National Equestrian School
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
EU	European Union
FASO	Financial Aid and Scholarships Office
FBS	Football Bowl Subdivision
FFF	French Football Federation
FFSU	French Federation of University Sports
FIBA	International Basketball Federation
FIFA	International Federation of Association Football
FISU	International University Sports Federation
FOX Sports	Fox Sports Media Group

FSUL	Lebanese Federation of University Sport
FU	France Universités
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GPA	Grade Point Average
GUC	Grenoble University Club
HDR	Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches
HEC	HEC Paris Business School
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HU	Haigazian University
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IF	International Sports Federation
IGESR	Inspection Générale de L'éducation, du Sport et de la Recherche
INSEP	National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IRaMuTeQ	Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires
ISF	International School Sport Festival
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IT	Information Technology
IUL	Islamic University of Lebanon
IUS	International Union of Students
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LAU	Lebanese American University
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LCU	Lebanese Canadian University
LF	Lebanese Forces
LFA	Lebanese Football Association
LGU	Lebanese German University
LIU	Lebanese International University
LMEHE	Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education

LMYS	Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports
LOC	Lebanese Olympic Committee
LOLF	Institutional Act on Financial Legislation
LU	Lebanese University
MAIF	Mutuelle d'Assurance des Instituteurs de France
MEMOS	Executive Masters in Management of Sports Organisations
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MESR	French Ministry of Higher Education and Research
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLS	Major League Soccer
MP	Member of Parliament
MSJOP	Ministry of Sports and the Olympic and Paralympic Games
MSJOP	Ministère des Sports et des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques
MSJVA	Ministère des Sports, de la Jeunesse et de la Vie Associative
MSS	Maisons Sport-Santé
MTV Lebanon	Murr Television- Lebanon
MU	Al Maaref University
MUBS	Modern University for Business and Science
MUC	Matn University College of Technology
NAIA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NDU	Notre Dame University-Louaize
NECHE	New England Commission of Higher Education
NFF	Football Association of Norway
NFL	National Football League
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

NHL	National Hockey League
NIL	Name, Image, and Likeness
NJCAA	National Junior College Athletics Association
NOC	National Olympic Committee
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
NSF	National Sports Federation
NSO	National Sport Organization
NSRC	National Sport and Recreation Centre
OMS	National Federation of Municipal Offices of Sports
OMT	Online Money Transfer
OPG	Olympic and Paralympic Games
PES	Physical Education and Sports
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PU	Phoenicia University
QCP	Quality Club Programme
QS Rankings	Quacquarelli Symonds Rankings
RHU	Rafik Hariri University
SA	Sports Association
SCSP	Public Service Funding Grant
SEC	Southeastern Conference
SESAM	Sciences Économiques, Sociologie et Anthropologie, les Sciences de Gestion, la Géographie Humaine et Physique, Aménagement, les Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives
SHN	Status of Elite Athletes
SOLIDEO	Olympic Works Delivery Agency
SSU	Sports and Scouting Unit
STAPS	Sciences et Techniques des Activités Physiques et Sportives
SUAPS	Service Universitaire d'Activités Physiques et Sportives

TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages in Lebanon
U.S.	United States
UA	Antonine University
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UFR3S	UFR Sciences de Santé et du Sport
UK	United Kingdom
ULS	Université La Sagesse
UN	United Nations
UNCU	National Union of University Clubs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UOB	University of Balamand
USA	United States of America
USC	University Sports Conference
USEK	Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
USJ	Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth
USOPC	United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
WNBA	Women's National Basketball Association

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Résumé

Cette thèse examine la structure unique du sport universitaire au Liban, un système qui reste largement méconnu dans la recherche académique. En analysant la gouvernance de la Fédération Sportive Universitaire Libanaise (FSUL) à travers des données recueillies auprès de 131 étudiants-athlètes issus de 24 universités et des entretiens avec 22 directeurs sportifs, cette étude identifie un modèle 'hybride'. Alors que les règles administratives sont fondées sur les traditions françaises, l'utilisation croissante des bourses sportives pour les étudiants témoigne d'une transition visible vers le système universitaire américain. Les résultats montrent également que les universités ne sont pas encore la source principale de formation des athlètes de haut niveau; au contraire, les associations sportives dirigent toujours le développement des athlètes. L'étude conclut que le Liban se trouve actuellement à la croisée des chemins entre les modèles de sport universitaire français et américain, tout en s'efforçant de construire sa propre identité.

Mots-clés: Sports universitaires; Liban; bourses sportives universitaires; modèle sportif français; modèle sportif américain

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Abstract

This thesis examines the unique structure of university sports in Lebanon, a system that remains mostly overlooked in academic research. By analyzing the governance of the Lebanese University Sport Federation (FSUL) through data collected from 131 student-athletes across 24 universities and interviews with 22 sports directors, this study identifies a 'hybrid' model. While the administrative rules are based on French traditions, the growing use of students' sports scholarships shows a visible shift toward the American collegiate system. The results also show that universities are not yet the primary source for training top athletes; instead, sports associations still lead athletes' development. The study concludes that Lebanon is currently caught between the French and American university sports models while trying to build its own identity.

Keywords: University sports; Lebanon; students' sports scholarships; French sports model; American sports model

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