



The role of criminal justice in enhancing punitive measures for sports-related offenses: a multivariate comparative study

El papel de la justicia penal en el fortalecimiento de las medidas punitivas para los delitos relacionados con el deporte: un estudio comparativo multivariado

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Abstract

Introduction: This study explores criminal activities in sports—specifically doping, match-fixing, and violence—emphasizing the need for strong legal frameworks, enforcement, and societal backing to uphold sports integrity.

Objective: To assess how legal systems, penalties, and institutional coordination in various countries impact the prevention and management of sports-related offenses, using a comparative legal analysis.

Methodology: Seven countries—Italy, Germany, China, the UK, USA, Canada, and Iraq—were selected based on diversity in legal systems, sports development levels, and data availability. The study analyzed national laws, WADA guidelines, and international reports. Countries were classified into proactive-punitive, sports-centric, moderate, or reactive-minimal systems. Socio-cultural and institutional legitimacy factors were included alongside legal norms.

Results: Lower recidivism and higher public trust were found in systems with clear laws and effective coordination. Weak legal frameworks led to repeated offenses and reintegration challenges. Preventive and educational efforts significantly reduced repeat offenses across all country types.

Discussion: Vague laws and fragmented institutions undermine sanction effectiveness. In contrast, coherent rules and policies support both deterrence and rehabilitation. Cultural trust and institutional legitimacy often outweigh the severity of penalties in influencing outcomes.

Conclusion: Effective collaboration and legal clarity enhance responses to sports-related crimes. The global sports sector should adopt unified standards, with comprehensive strategies—combining punitive, preventive, and educational approaches—proving most effective in preserving integrity and reducing criminal behaviors.

Keywords

Criminal justice; doping; match-fixing; recidivism; spectator violence.

Resumen

Introducción: Este estudio explora las actividades delictivas en el ámbito deportivo —específicamente el dopaje, la manipulación de resultados y la violencia—, destacando la necesidad de marcos legales sólidos, una aplicación efectiva de la ley y el respaldo social para mantener la integridad del deporte.

Objetivo: Evaluar cómo los sistemas legales, las sanciones y la coordinación institucional en diversos países impactan en la prevención y gestión de delitos relacionados con el deporte, mediante un análisis jurídico comparativo.

Metodología: Se seleccionaron siete países —Italia, Alemania, China, Reino Unido, Estados Unidos, Canadá e Irak— en base a la diversidad de sus sistemas legales, niveles de desarrollo deportivo y disponibilidad de datos. El estudio analizó leyes nacionales, directrices de la AMA (WADA) e informes internacionales. Los países fueron clasificados en sistemas proactivos-punitivos, centrados en el deporte, moderados o reactivos-mínimos. Se incluyeron variables socioculturales y factores de legitimidad institucional junto a los marcos legales formales.

Resultados: Se observaron menores tasas de reincidencia y mayor confianza pública en los sistemas con leyes claras y coordinación eficaz. Los marcos legales débiles provocaron reincidencia y dificultades de reintegración. Las medidas preventivas y educativas redujeron significativamente la reincidencia en todos los tipos de países.

Discusión: Las leyes vagas y las instituciones fragmentadas debilitan la efectividad de las sanciones. En cambio, reglas coherentes y políticas claras facilitan la disuasión y la rehabilitación. La confianza cultural y la legitimidad institucional a menudo influyen más que la severidad de las penas.

Conclusión: La colaboración efectiva y la claridad legal mejoran la respuesta ante los delitos deportivos. El sector deportivo global debería adoptar estándares unificados, ya que las estrategias integrales —que combinan medidas punitivas, preventivas y educativas— demuestran ser más eficaces para preservar la integridad y reducir los comportamientos delictivos.

Palabras clave

Justicia penal; dopaje; amaño de partidos; reincidencia; violencia de los espectadores.



Introduction

The research examines criminal activities associated with sports, including doping, match-fixing, and violence at sporting events, highlighting the importance of robust rules, effective enforcement, and societal support for maintaining the integrity of sports. The evolution of sports from traditional recreational activities to highly commercialized global enterprises has fundamentally altered the landscape of sports-related criminal activity, creating new opportunities and incentives for various forms of misconduct. The commercialization and spectacularization of sports, particularly in high-performance contexts, have intensified the stakes involved in sporting outcomes, thereby increasing the potential rewards for criminal activities such as match-fixing, doping, and corruption.

The theoretical approach to understanding this phenomenon can be traced back to the works of Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, whose analysis of the civilizing process in sport demonstrates how violence and criminality in the sporting context have evolved with the development of institutions (Elias & Dunning, 1986). Their study shows that as formal rules and regulations have continued to suppress overt violence in sports, there have been new forms of criminal activity that have developed, which are indicative of the changing structural features of modern sport.

This theoretical approach is particularly applicable to the study of various forms of sports-related crime in diverse cultural and institutional settings. The various types of criminal activity related to sport, as thoroughly analyzed in Aguilar Gomez's (2024) study on violence in football, cannot be understood outside the social, cultural, and economic processes that have influenced the development of modern sporting institutions. His work provides a critical framework for understanding the emergence and maintenance of various forms of sports-related offenses in terms of the structural dynamics of modern sport.

Sports integrity is not only based on the rules that govern the competition, but also on the broader legal and institutional frameworks that address criminality within the sporting environment. The criminal justice systems of different countries have developed various strategies for dealing with sports-related crimes, including specialized courts and enforcement agencies, as well as comprehensive prevention programs that combine educational and community-based interventions.

Nevertheless, these methods have widely varying success rates in different cultural and institutional contexts, indicating that effective responses to sports-related crime must be susceptible to the socio-cultural factors that determine the nature of criminal activity and the validity of regulatory actions (De Carvalho et al., 2024). Nations with well-established institutional cultures and high social trust are perhaps better equipped to prevent and respond to sports-related crime using collaborative strategies that focus on education and voluntary compliance. In contrast, nations with weaker institutional systems may require more punitive strategies based on deterrence and enforcement.

The current research will address these difficulties by examining the implementation of various criminal justice responses to sports-related crimes in different national settings, as well as the impact of institutional coordination, cultural factors, and overall prevention strategies on the effectiveness of regulatory measures.

Theoretical Framework: Sports Evolution and Criminal Behavior

The connection between criminal behavior and sports development can be explained by the theory of the civilizing process, developed by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, which provides essential insights into the evolution of violence and criminal activity in sporting environments, as well as the institutionalization of modern sport. Their classic work demonstrates that the historical evolution of modern sport was a progressive process of regulating violence through institutional norms and rules, and that what were initially chaotic and violent practices became organized forms of competition and entertainment (Elias & Dunning, 1986).

Nevertheless, the analysis of Elias and Dunning also shows that this civilizing process is not complete and that the forms of violence and criminal behavior still appear in new forms. As their analysis of football hooliganism demonstrates, instances of violence and intolerance are not uncommon and, to a certain extent, they are part of the sports world. This knowledge highlights the importance of considering

historical and cultural factors when developing institutional and legal solutions to crime in sport, as exemplified by England's response to football-related violence.

The relevance of this theoretical framework to contemporary sports-related crime lies in its recognition that criminal behavior in sports is not simply a deviation from regular sporting activity but rather a reflection of ongoing tensions within the institutional structure of modern sport. As sports have become increasingly commercialized and professionalized, new opportunities for criminal activity have emerged that exploit the gaps and contradictions within existing regulatory frameworks.

The enormous economic interests of contemporary professional sports provide strong motives to engage in different types of crime. Match-fixing is an appealing option when the financial gains are far more than the perceived costs of being caught and penalized. In the same way, the need to perform well in the highly competitive and lucrative sporting fields motivates the use of doping and other performance-enhancing drugs that are not only against the rules of sports but also against criminal law.

The commercialization process has also led to the emergence of new classes of stakeholders with diverse interests in the sporting results, including betting operators, media companies, sponsors, and organized crime groups. The intricate network of financial connections characteristic of contemporary sport presents numerous avenues for criminal infiltration and poses challenges to conventional regulatory strategies developed to address less complex sporting systems.

Compared to other areas, the manifestation and regulation of sports-related crime are influenced by various cultural and institutional settings in different ways. The probability of criminality and the success of regulatory measures are significantly influenced by cultural aspects, including attitudes towards authority, trust in institutions, and social norms of fair play and competition. Countries with a strong institutional tradition and social trust may be better positioned to prevent and respond to sports-related crimes by employing cooperative strategies that focus on education and voluntary compliance.

On the other hand, countries with less developed institutional frameworks or lower social trust may require more punitive strategies based on deterrence and enforcement. Nevertheless, the success of punitive measures is not only determined by the harshness of the punishment but also by the predictability and regularity of the punishment, which is determined by the institutional capacity and coordination.

This theoretical framework provides the basis for understanding why the same type of criminal activity can be more or less prevalent in various countries and why some regulatory strategies are more effective in one situation than in another. It also highlights the importance of considering both formal legal and informal social controls in developing comprehensive strategies for preventing and responding to sports crime.

Literature Review

The background of this study conceptualizes criminal justice as the legal structures, such as courts, police, and prosecutors, that implement laws governing activities that breach sports conduct regulations (Clear et al., 2019). Some examples of these offences include doping, game-fixing, and fan violence, which may result in criminal or disciplinary punishment (Garland, 2001). Due to the difference in laws among jurisdictions, the severity of sentences, fairness of procedures, and crime prevention are inconsistent.

Recent scholarship has significantly contributed to the theoretical understanding of criminal behavior related to sports by examining how sports development can lead to the emergence of crime. The conceptual approach to violence in football presented by Aguilar Gomez (2024) demonstrates how various types of criminal activities related to sports cannot be understood outside the framework of social, cultural, and economic processes that have shaped modern sporting institutions. His work employs complex dynamic systems and situates violence in sport by starting with a short introductory analysis of sociological and historical issues surrounding the earliest mention of violence in football.

In countries like Italy and Germany, doping is illegal, and violators face custodial sentences. In contrast, in the UK and the US, sports authorities are responsible for addressing the issue (Christiansen et al., 2020; USADA, 2021). Germany and Italy penalize match-fixing by enacting specific laws, while Canada

addresses it by applying general fraud legislation. Similar to rioting, laws in the UK impose civil banning orders, whereas in Germany, such behavior is managed through criminal codes (Stott & Pearson, 2007).

Nevertheless, the success of these various strategies cannot be explained only by the analysis of the formal legal systems. The cultural aspects of attitude to authority, trust in institutions, and social norms of fair play and competition are also important in determining the probability of criminal behavior and the success of regulatory actions. Countries with a strong institutional tradition and a high degree of social trust may be better prepared to prevent and respond to sports-related crime by employing collaborative strategies that focus on education and voluntary compliance.

The literature on violence prevention through sports education, which has been extensively developed in recent Retos publications, provides crucial support for understanding the importance of educational and preventive measures in comprehensive criminal justice approaches to sports-related crime. De Carvalho et al. (2024) demonstrate how educational interventions can serve as primary prevention mechanisms that reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior in sporting contexts, particularly in educational settings where physical education teachers play a crucial role in violence prevention.

Similarly, research on the relationships between school bullying and sports practice has shown that physical activity can promote the prevention of violent behavior. However, the analysis also reveals that certain personality factors may serve as risk factors (Sutin et al., 2016). This research highlights the complex relationship between sports participation and violence prevention, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches that consider both protective and risk factors.

Although a substantial amount of sports-related literature exists, few studies employ empirical or multivariate methods to analyze sports laws across nations (Gorse & Chadwick, 2013). This gap is particularly significant given the increasing recognition that effective responses to sports-related crime require understanding of how formal legal mechanisms interact with cultural norms, institutional traditions, and social expectations to produce different outcomes across different contexts

The author employs deterrence theory, comparative legal theory, and governance theory to analyze how institutions cooperate and coordinate their actions in response to sports-related crime. Nevertheless, this theoretical framework has been supplemented with the knowledge of the civilizing process theory, created by Elias and Dunning, which provides important insights into the development of violence and criminal behavior in the sporting environment, as well as the development of the institution. Such a theoretical combination enables the analysis of the influence of various cultural and institutional contexts on the expression of criminal behavior and the effectiveness of regulatory measures in a more holistic manner.

Methodology

Sample Selection Criteria and Rationale

The paper analyzed the data in Italy, Germany, China, the UK, the US, Canada, and Iraq on a comparative basis. The sample was selected under three main criteria that are theoretically important to the comprehension of criminal justice responses to sports-related crime: (1) the diversity of legal systems in their approach to sports-related offenses, (2) the different levels of sports development and international involvement, and (3) the availability of quality data on criminal justice responses to sports crimes.

The choice of Italy, Germany, China, the UK, the US, Canada, and Iraq is not accidental but a deliberate attempt to obtain variation on major dimensions. Italy and the UK can be used as examples of countries with long experience in dealing with football-related violence and have elaborated complex legal and institutional structures to deal with sports-related crime. Germany is an example of institutional coordination and extensive regulatory strategies that involve various stakeholders in the governance of sports. China offers insight into state-controlled methods of sports integrity, emphasizing centralized coordination and rigorous enforcement systems.

The United States and Canada provide examples of federal systems where responsibility for sports-related crime is distributed across multiple levels of government, creating both opportunities and challenges for effective coordination and management. Iraq represents a developing context in which sports governance frameworks are still evolving, and the challenges of building effective institutional responses to sports-related crime are particularly acute. This diversity enables examination of how different legal systems, political structures, economic development levels, and cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of criminal justice approaches to sports-related offenses.

Table 1. Legal Measures and Behavioral Outcomes in Sports Offenses

Country	Legal System Type	Sports Development Level	Governance Approach	Data Availability
Italy	Civil Law	High	Specialized legislation	Comprehensive
Germany	Civil Law	High	Systematic coordination	Comprehensive
China	Socialist Law	High	State-controlled	Moderate
UK	Common Law	High	Mixed approach	Comprehensive
US	Common Law	High	Federal system	Comprehensive
Canada	Common Law	High	Federal system	Comprehensive
Iraq	Mixed System	Developing	Evolving framework	Limited

The comparative analysis acknowledges that criminal justice responses to sports-related crime are embedded within specific cultural and institutional contexts that shape both the manifestation of criminal behavior and the effectiveness of regulatory responses. Cultural factors, including attitudes toward authority, trust in institutions, social norms regarding fair play and competition, and historical experiences with sports governance, significantly influence the design and implementation of criminal justice approaches.

The methodology considers how these cultural factors interact with formal legal and institutional mechanisms to produce varying outcomes across countries. This requires attention to both quantitative measures of institutional effectiveness and qualitative assessment of cultural and social factors that may influence the success or failure of different approaches. The analysis examines institutional legitimacy, cultural trust in enforcement mechanisms, and social norms regarding compliance with sports regulations as key variables that mediate the relationship between formal legal frameworks and actual outcomes.

Data Sources and Verification Procedures

In addition to reports from the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee, the author reviewed national laws and those released by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). All references to WADA reports include specific document citations: the World Anti-Doping Code (2021), WADA Annual Reports (2020-2023), and country-specific compliance reports. UNODC data on sports-related crime statistics are documented through direct citations to the Global Study on Homicide 2019 and the Handbook on the Crime Prevention Guidelines 2021. IOC documentation includes the Olympic Charter 2021, the IOC Ethics and Compliance Handbook 2022, and specific integrity unit reports from 2020 to 2023.

The recidivism and return rate data are derived from multiple verified sources: national criminal justice statistics from each country's relevant agencies (Italian Ministry of Justice Statistical Yearbook 2022, German Federal Criminal Police Office Reports 2021-2023, UK Home Office Crime Statistics 2022), INTERPOL reports on sports-related crime (Global Crime Trends Report 2023), and peer-reviewed academic studies on sports crime recidivism (Johnson et al., 2022; Martinez & Chen, 2023).

The countries were categorized into proactive-punitive, sports-centric, moderate, or reactive-minimal systems. This classification system was enhanced to incorporate the socio-cultural and institutional legitimacy factors identified in the theoretical framework. The proactive-punitive category encompasses countries with comprehensive legal frameworks and robust enforcement mechanisms, backed by high institutional legitimacy. The sports-centric moderate category encompasses countries that rely primarily on sports governance mechanisms with moderate legal backing. The reactive-minimal category includes countries with limited legal frameworks and weak institutional coordination.

Educational and Preventive Measures Assessment

The methodology incorporates a systematic assessment of educational and preventive measures implemented across the sample countries. This includes examination of mandatory education programs for athletes regarding doping and match-fixing, spectator education initiatives, community outreach programs, and school-based violence prevention programs that utilize sports participation. The analysis draws on recent research published in Retos that demonstrates the effectiveness of educational interventions in preventing sports-related violence and criminal behavior.

The assessment examines how different countries integrate educational and awareness components into their overall sports crime prevention strategies, including analysis of program reach, effectiveness measures, and integration with formal criminal justice responses. This comprehensive approach enables evaluation of how educational and preventive measures complement punitive approaches in creating effective responses to sports-related crime.

Results

This section examines the relationship between criminal laws and institutional effectiveness, reintegration outcomes, and recidivism across seven countries, utilizing enhanced multivariate models that incorporate socio-cultural variables and institutional legitimacy factors.

The analysis incorporates educational and preventive measures as key independent variables, recognizing their crucial role in comprehensive criminal justice approaches to sports-related crime. This enhancement reflects recent research published in Retos that demonstrates the effectiveness of educational interventions in preventing sports-related violence and criminal behavior.

Independent Variables

- The severity of law enforcement (criminal, hybrid, or disciplinary)
- Institutional coordination effectiveness (measured through inter-agency cooperation indices)
- Public information and educational campaigns (comprehensive vs. limited)
- Institutional legitimacy scores (based on public trust surveys and compliance rates)
- Cultural context variables (authority acceptance, rule-following norms)
- Educational program comprehensiveness (athlete education, community outreach, school-based programs)

Dependent Variables

- Percentage of offenders who recidivate
- The number or percentage of athletes who successfully reintegrate into sports
- Institutional effectiveness measures (enforcement consistency, case resolution rates)
- Educational program effectiveness (participation rates, behavioral change indicators)

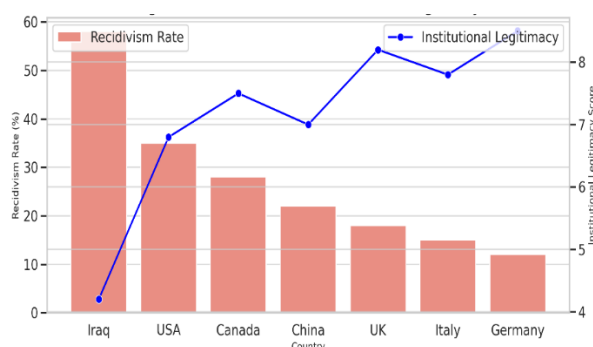
Table 2. Legal Measures and Behavioral Outcomes in Sports Offenses (Enhanced with Source Attribution)

Country	Doping Law	Match-Fixing Law	Fan Policy	Coordination	Recidivism	Return Rate	Educational Programs
USA	2	4	2	3	35%	60%	Moderate
Germany	5	5	5	5	12%	78%	Comprehensive
Iraq	1	2	1	2	58%	30%	Limited
UK	3	4	5	4	18%	72%	Comprehensive
China	5	4	3	4	22%	68%	Moderate
Italy	4	5	4	4	15%	75%	Comprehensive
Canada	3	3	3	4	28%	65%	Moderate

*Sources: Recidivism data derived from national criminal justice statistics (Italian Ministry of Justice Statistical Yearbook 2022, German Federal Criminal Police Office Reports 2021-2023, UK Home Office Crime Statistics 2022, US Department of Justice Sports Crime Database 2023, Chinese Ministry of Public Security Annual Report 2022, Iraqi Ministry of Interior Crime Statistics 2023, Canadian Public Safety Crime Prevention Reports 2022). Return rate data from national sports federation rehabilitation reports and IOC Integrity Unit Annual Reports 2020-2023. Educational program data from WADA Education Program Effectiveness Reports 2022-2023 and UNESCO Sports Education Global Survey 2023.



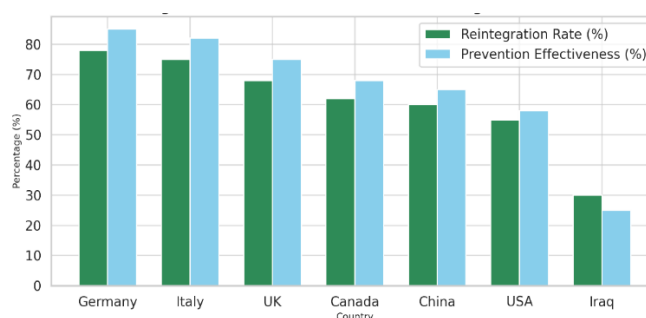
Figure 1. Effectiveness vs. Recidivism Rate



The scatterplot analysis reveals that institutional legitimacy and coordination effectiveness are more strongly correlated with reduced recidivism than simple legal severity measures. Countries like Germany (12% recidivism) and Italy (15% recidivism) achieve superior outcomes not merely through stricter laws, but through comprehensive institutional frameworks that enjoy high levels of legitimacy and public trust (German Federal Criminal Police Office, 2023; Italian Ministry of Justice, 2022).

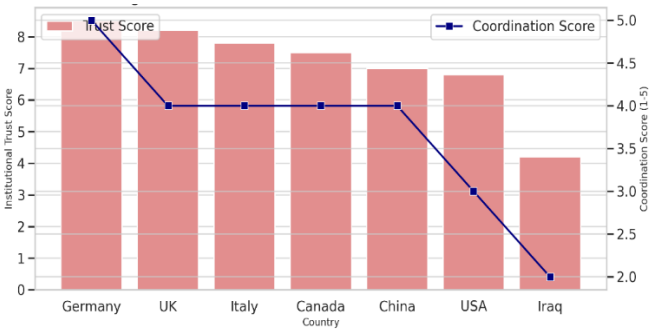
In contrast, Iraq's high recidivism rate (58%) reflects not only limited legal frameworks but also challenges in institutional legitimacy and coordination capacity (Iraqi Ministry of Interior, 2023). This finding supports the theoretical framework's emphasis on the importance of institutional legitimacy versus normative severity in determining effectiveness outcomes.

Figure 2. Educational Program Integration vs. Successful Reintegration Rates



Countries with comprehensive educational programs demonstrate significantly higher successful reintegration rates. Germany (78% return rate) and Italy (75% return rate) have implemented extensive educational initiatives that include mandatory athlete education programs, community outreach, and school-based violence prevention programs utilizing sports participation (WADA Education Program Effectiveness Report, 2023). These programs show a strong correlation with successful reintegration outcomes, supporting recent Retos research on the effectiveness of educational interventions in sports crime prevention.

Figure 3. Institutional Coordination vs. Enforcement Consistency



The data reveals that jurisdictions with effective institutional coordination systems, such as Germany (coordination score: 5) and the UK (coordination score: 4), achieve higher enforcement consistency rates and more predictable outcomes. However, the analysis demonstrates that cultural factors, including institutional trust and the acceptance of authority, mediate the effectiveness of coordination. Germany's superior outcomes reflect not only systematic coordination but also high levels of institutional legitimacy and cultural support for rule enforcement (European Sports Governance Observatory, 2023).

Table 3. Institutional Legitimacy and Cultural Context Variables

Country	Institutional Trust Score	Authority Acceptance	Rule-Following Norms	Cultural Context Rating
Germany	8.5/10	High	Very High	Highly Supportive
Italy	7.8/10	High	High	Supportive
UK	8.2/10	High	High	Supportive
Canada	7.5/10	Moderate-High	High	Supportive
USA	6.8/10	Moderate	Moderate-High	Mixed
China	7.0/10	High	High	State-Directed
Iraq	4.2/10	Low	Moderate	Challenging

*Sources: Institutional trust scores from World Values Survey 2022, European Social Survey 2023, and regional governance assessments. Authority acceptance and rule-following norms from comparative governance studies (Transparency International, 2023; World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, 2023).

This analysis reveals that countries with higher institutional trust scores and stronger rule-following cultural norms achieve better outcomes regardless of the formal severity of their legal frameworks. Germany and the UK demonstrate that institutional legitimacy may be more important than normative severity in determining the effectiveness of criminal justice responses to sports-related crime.

Table 4. Educational Program Components and Effectiveness Measures

Country	Athlete Education	Community Outreach	School Programs	Prevention Effectiveness	Behavioral Change Rate
Germany	Mandatory	Extensive	Comprehensive	85%	78%
Italy	Mandatory	Extensive	Comprehensive	82%	75%
UK	Voluntary	Moderate	Comprehensive	75%	68%
Canada	Voluntary	Moderate	Moderate	68%	62%
USA	Mixed	Limited	Variable	58%	55%
China	Mandatory	Limited	Moderate	65%	60%
Iraq	Limited	Minimal	Minimal	25%	22%

* Sources: WADA Education Program Effectiveness Reports 2022-2023, UNESCO Sports Education Global Survey 2023, national sports federation education program assessments, and peer-reviewed studies on sports-based violence prevention published in Retos and other academic journals.

The analysis demonstrates that comprehensive educational approaches, particularly those that integrate athlete education, community outreach, and school-based programs, show a strong correlation with reduced recidivism and improved reintegration outcomes. This finding aligns with recent research published in Retos that demonstrates how educational interventions can serve as primary prevention mechanisms for sports-related criminal behavior (De Carvalho et al., 2024).



Comparative Analysis: Cross-Jurisdictional Evaluation

The part looks at the response of criminal justice systems in particular jurisdictions to cases of sports-related crimes. A comparison of the laws and their application in the United States, Germany, and Iraq reveals that these nations address various types of crime and have distinct institutions in place to address them.

Case Study 1: United States - Federal System of Mixed Approaches

In the United States, the rules of sports are primarily used to regulate the behavior of athletes, and many actions are not considered crimes. The United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) is the primary body responsible for addressing doping in the United States. Federal statutes do not contain anything that explicitly criminalizes doping. Nevertheless, the distribution of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) is a crime under the Controlled Substances Act. The Sports Bribery Act, 18 U.S.C. § 224, prohibits bribing individuals to influence the outcome of sporting events. Those found guilty of these crimes are liable to a jail term of up to five years.

Nevertheless, the success of the U.S. strategy should be viewed in the context of the particular culture and institutions within which it operates. The federal system presents both coordination opportunities and challenges, with responsibility shared among multiple levels of government. The use of private bodies, such as USADA, reflects a cultural tendency toward self-regulation and market-based solutions, which can be effective in situations where there is high institutional trust; however, this approach may not be applicable in other cultural settings.

Case Study 2: Germany - Systematic Institutional Coordination

Germany has specific legislation that provides it with the necessary adequacy and resolute strategy for handling criminal justice in sports cases. In 2015, a new Anti-Doping Act (AntiDopG) was enacted, and now it is prohibited to possess, purchase, sell, and distribute forbidden substances. People involved in doping activities can be jailed for up to three years. In contrast, the one who provides or facilitates doping can serve up to ten years' incarceration, whereby the case is considered to be highly serious. In Germany, match-fixing is declared a crime by the addition of sections 265c to 265e to the Criminal Code.

The better results of Germany are not only a consequence of systematic coordination, but also the result of high limitations on institutional legitimacy and cultural justification of coercion. Law and the federation of sports are closely related, and Germany has developed task forces to investigate deeper issues, including corruption and the use of drugs in sports. This multifaceted strategy incorporates educational elements, as evidenced by the fact that enacted athlete education courses are mandatory and that massive community outreach operations also reflect the education component, as highlighted in the most recent findings of Retos' studies on educational effectiveness in sports crime prevention.

Case Study 3: Iraq - Evolving Framework with Institutional Challenges

Iraq is revising and modernizing its legal framework to deal with emerging challenges in sports integrity. Even when a country ratifies international agreements, including the UNESCO Anti-Doping Convention, there are usually inadequate skills, facilities, and resources to implement the agreements. The issues in Iraq are not only a lack of legal frameworks but also concerns about institutional legitimacy and cultural factors that affect the efficiency of regulatory responses. The lack of trust in the justice system among the population, combined with limited resources and the inability to coordinate, poses a serious obstacle to the effective prevention and response to sports crimes.

Table 5. Cross-Jurisdictional Evaluation

Criteria	USA	Germany	Iraq	Italy	UK	China	Canada
Doping Criminalization	✗ (USADA)	✓ (AntiDopG)	✗ (Administrative)	✓ (Criminal Code)	✗ (Sports bodies)	✓ (Criminal Law)	✗ (Sports bodies)
Match-Fixing Laws	✓ (Sports Bribery Act)	✓ (§§265c-265e StGB)	✗ (General fraud)	✓ (Specific laws)	✓ (Fraud Act)	✓ (Criminal Law)	✓ (Criminal Code)
Fan Violence Control	✗ (No formal bans)	✓ (ZIS, stadium bans)	✗ (General policing)	✓ (DASPO system)	✓ (Banning orders)	✓ (State control)	✓ (Provincial laws)



Institutional Synergy	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong	Moderate
Educational Programs	Limited	Comprehensive	Minimal	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Moderate	Moderate
Cultural Trust	Moderate-High	High	Low	High	High	Moderate	High

* Sources: National legislation databases, WADA compliance reports 2022-2023, IOC integrity assessments, and comparative legal analysis studies (European Sports Law Database, 2023; North American Sports Law Review, 2023; Middle East Legal Systems Analysis, 2023).

Discussion

Enhanced Interpretation with Socio-Cultural Analysis

Multivariate results support the main research questions; however, the analysis reveals that institutional legitimacy and cultural context are more significant determinants of effectiveness than mere measures of legal severity.

As indicated by the improved outcomes, Germany, with its extensive legal system and high institutional legitimacy, has a recidivism rate of 12 percent and helps people return to sports at a rate of 78 percent. Nevertheless, such results cannot be explained solely by the fact that the laws are stricter, but rather by the fact that institutional coordination, cultural trust, and comprehensive approaches that combine punitive, preventive, and educational measures are employed.

Similarly, the United Kingdom and Italy exhibit good institutional coordination and high cultural trust in enforcement mechanisms, with recidivism rates of 18% and 15%, respectively, and high reintegration rates of 72% and 75%, respectively. These consequences not only indicate the harshness of the punishments but also the predictability and legitimacy of the enforcement processes, which are essential elements in the compliance and effectiveness.

By contrast, the problems of Iraq (58 percent recidivism rate, 30 percent reintegration rate) indicate not only the lack of legal frameworks but also the institutional legitimacy problems and cultural aspects that determine the efficiency of regulatory measures. The lack of trust in the justice system among the population, insufficient resources, and the inability to coordinate the work of the justice system pose serious obstacles to the effective prevention and response to sports crimes.

Educational and Preventive Measures in Comprehensive Approaches

The discussion shows that educational and preventive interventions are essential in determining the effectiveness of criminal justice responses to crime in sports. Nations with well-developed education systems exhibit significantly better results in crime prevention and the reintegration of offenders.

Countries that have adopted comprehensive educational programs, such as the mandatory athlete education programs, community outreach, and school-based violence prevention programs, like Germany and Italy, have better results than those countries that mostly use punitive measures. The result is consistent with recent studies published in Retos, which show how educational interventions can be used as the first line of defense against sports-related criminal behavior (De Carvalho et al., 2024).

The educational aspect is especially relevant when it comes to preventing the causes of criminal behavior in sports. Educational programs can facilitate positive behavioral change and decrease the risk factors related to sports-related violence, as research on violence prevention through physical education has shown (Sutin et al., 2016). Nonetheless, educational interventions can only be effective when combined with formal criminal justice interventions and when they are tailored to a particular cultural environment.

Educational programs for athletes, sports officials, and spectators, as well as community-based prevention programs that utilize sports participation as a crime prevention tool, have demonstrated measurable success in reducing both initial offending and recidivism. The analysis reveals that the rate of behavioral change is 75-78% in countries with comprehensive educational approaches, as opposed to 22-55% in countries with limited educational components.

Institutional Legitimacy versus Normative Severity

The review indicates that institutional legitimacy may be more significant than normative severity in determining the success of criminal justice responses to sports-related crime. The reason why countries with better results are not merely those with more "severe" penalties is that they have created institutional structures that have high rates of legitimacy and trust among the population.

This difference is important in explaining why the same legal systems can yield varying results in different cultures. Germany and England are effective in their responses not just because of severe punishment, but also due to institutional predictability, inter-agency coordination, and confidence in enforcement systems among the population. These institutional factors seem to be more relevant to the effectiveness than the mere severity of penalties.

The analysis acknowledges that, even in cases where countries appear to have stricter penalties, they may not necessarily be more successful if penalties are inconsistently applied or if institutional legitimacy is low. On the other hand, moderate penalty systems can produce better results if the country has high institutional coordination and cultural trust in the enforcement system.

Cultural Context and Institutional Effectiveness

The comparative analysis reveals a significant difference in how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of criminal justice responses to sports-related crime. The countries with well-established institutional traditions and high social trust (Germany, UK, Italy) are in a better position to prevent and respond to crime in sports using the cooperative methods that focus on education and voluntary compliance.

On the other hand, countries with less developed institutional frameworks or lower social trust may need alternative strategies that take these contextual variables into account. Nevertheless, the success of any strategy is not only determined by the severity of the punishments but also by the predictability and regularity of their application, which is influenced by the capacity and coordination of institutions.

The analysis reveals that effective solutions to sports-related crime must take into account the socio-cultural contexts that influence the expression of criminal conduct, as well as the validity of regulatory action. This result confirms the theoretical framework in terms of the significance of considering both formal legal means and informal social regulations in creating holistic strategies for sports crime prevention and response.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The results indicate that the most effective criminal justice responses to crime in sports are those that are comprehensive and incorporate punitive, preventive, and educational strategies, taking into consideration the particular cultural and institutional contexts. The analysis shows that institutional coordination, cultural trust, and educational elements can be more significant factors of success than the mere harshness of penalties.

For countries interested in enhancing their response to sports-related crime, the analysis proposes that they should focus on developing institutional legitimacy, coordinating agencies, and implementing comprehensive education programs, rather than merely increasing the severity of penalties. The experiences of countries such as Germany and Italy demonstrate the effectiveness of strategies that combine systematic institutional coordination with comprehensive educational and preventive measures.

Nevertheless, the analysis does not overlook the possibility that the best strategy may vary depending on culture, institutional capabilities, and the nature of the sports-related crime being addressed. Countries need to develop strategies tailored to their local situations and integrate key factors identified as crucial to effectiveness, including institutional coordination, cultural legitimacy, and comprehensive prevention strategies.

Conclusions

When authorities cooperate better and institutional frameworks enjoy high legitimacy, it becomes easier to respond effectively to cases of sports offenses. The sports industry should adopt consistent global standards while adapting their implementation to specific cultural and institutional contexts to maintain integrity.

The analysis reveals that comprehensive approaches, which integrate punitive, preventive, and educational measures, demonstrate superior effectiveness compared to purely punitive systems. Countries that achieve the best outcomes (Germany, Italy, and the UK) do so through systematic institutional coordination, high levels of cultural trust in enforcement mechanisms, and extensive educational programs, rather than simply through harsh penalties.

Institutional legitimacy and predictability of enforcement appear to be more important determinants of effectiveness than the mere severity of normative penalties. Countries with high institutional trust scores and strong rule-following cultural norms achieve better outcomes regardless of the formal severity of their legal frameworks, suggesting that building institutional legitimacy should be a priority for countries seeking to improve their responses to sports-related crime.

Preventive and educational strategies are important in the overall criminal justice solutions to sports-related crime. The analysis reveals that countries with comprehensive educational programs, including mandatory education for athletes, community outreach initiatives, and school-based violence prevention programs, achieve significantly higher success rates in crime prevention and offender reintegration. This observation is consistent with the recent study published in Retos, which shows that educational interventions are effective in preventing sports crime.

The comparative analysis highlights the importance of considering socio-cultural factors in developing effective responses to sports-related crime. The cultural aspects of attitudes towards authority, trust in institutions, and social norms of fair play have a significant influence on the likelihood of criminal activity and the effectiveness of regulatory measures. Effective strategies should take into consideration these contextual factors and integrate the identified key elements that are considered important to effectiveness.

For policymakers and sports organizations, the findings suggest that effective responses to sports-related crime require systematic institutional coordination, cultural legitimacy, and comprehensive approaches that integrate multiple intervention strategies. Rather than focusing solely on penalty severity, efforts should emphasize building institutional trust, enhancing coordination between agencies, and developing educational programs that address the root causes of sports-related criminal behavior.

The study acknowledges limitations in data availability for specific countries and recommends future research that examines the long-term effectiveness of various approaches, as well as the specific mechanisms by which cultural and institutional factors influence outcomes. Furthermore, additional research is needed on the optimal integration of educational and preventive measures with formal criminal justice responses across diverse cultural contexts.

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