

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL GRASS-ROOT SPORT CLUB'S GOVERNANCE
-A case study Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat

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Master's thesis
Autumn 2017

Suomalainen, J. 2017. Characteristics of Successful Grass-root Sport Club's Governance: Case Study Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat. Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences. University of Jyväskylä. Social Sciences of Sport. Master's thesis, 88 pp. 3 appendices.

Grass-root sport clubs have a substantial role of delivering services for people of all ages, as well as a deep-rooted traditions and history in national competitive sports in Finland. Hence, voluntary boards that govern the clubs have a pivotal role of ensuring the quality of delivering the clubs' services to consumers, through governance. Therefore, the aim of this qualitative case study is to depict what good governance practices can be found from a successful Finnish grass-root sport club's board's practices and operations that make the whole organization successful, as well as to provide suggestions for the particular board how to improve its towards higher quality governance.

The main theoretical framework leans on a research on NSOs' boards' strategic capability by Ferkins and Shilbury (2012). Additionally, contemporary sport management research and literature were used to compliment the strategic capability signposts in mapping out the good governance practices of Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat's board. The data was collected in December 2015 with seven semi-structured interviews on the club's Board Members and the Executive Manager. The seven informants were interviewed once. After all interviews were completed, they were immediately transcribed verbatim and analysed with ATLAS.ti software, respectively.

The Board consisted of people that were capable of executing the tasks trusted upon them, and understand their legal obligations. The Board utilized the annual action plan as their frame of reference, but were in the midst of formulating a long-term plan, a strategy. The Board was overtly engaged with the operational section of the club, but also aware of its responsibilities regarding the club's budget. The Board's processes were mainly sound, but undocumented. Atmosphere was a significant factor that affected positively, not only the Board's functionality, but also individual Board Members' voluntary effort. Another significant factor that affected the entire operation of the board as well as individual Board Members was information, which shifted power relations and thus influences decision-making. Information related issues also hindered the overall operation of the board through decision-making process.

The results suggest that the board adheres mostly to good governance practices, which influences the overall functionality of the board and thus the club. However, there are practices and habits in place that consume the precious time and human resources of the voluntary board.

Keywords

grass-root sport club, board of representatives, governance

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INTRODUCTION

As volunteer associations and civic sector form the base for Finnish physical culture (Koski, Itkonen, Lehtonen & Vehmas, 2015), there are approximately 10 000 sport clubs in Finland (Koski, 2012) where, yearly, over a million Finns take part in activities that the clubs provide (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012). Furthermore, European sport clubs, including Finnish sport clubs (see Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012), offer the main source of sport instruction and participation for people of all ages, skill level and interest (Mull, Bayless, Ross & Jamieson, 1997). Moreover, children's sport is the foundation of high performance sports in Finland, and its main function and role in club activities, is well renowned. National level competitive sports, in the core of sport clubs, have deep-rooted traditions and a long history. (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012.)

Functional governance is a prerequisite for a functional sport club (Heinilä & Koski, 1991). Although good governance may not be a solution to all problems faced by an organization, it creates an environment necessary for success that enables managers to make the most effective use of their resources and consider thoroughly the interests of stakeholders. Furthermore, results of good governance are efficient, effective and ethical management of sport. (Palmer, 2011.) Considering the substantial role that grass-root sport clubs have in Finnish society and as a provider of services, it is important that the clubs are governed in a manner that they ensure the quality of their services and the functionality of their operations. However, good governance might be easier to demand than it is for voluntary boards to provide. Constant deficiency of capable individuals who are willing to take on one of the least popular voluntary tasks in sport clubs (see Koski, Itkonen, Lehtonen. & Vehmas, 2015) combined with lack of time resources, place challenges on boards that mainly consist of voluntary workforce.

The existing body of research on organizational structure (e.g. Amis & Slack, 1996; Thiel & Mayer, 2009), strategic capability (e.g. Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012; Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2005; Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald, 2009), board effectiveness (e.g. Herman & Renz, 2000; Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004; Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012) board performance (e.g. Papadimitriou, 1999; Hoye, 2006; Hoye, 2007; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003a; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003b), board member roles (e.g. Inglis), and

governance literature (e.g. Hoye & Cuskelly 2007; Palmer 2011) offer insights to good and poor voluntary sport organization (VSO) governance. However, the contemporary international sport management research and literature has mainly concentrated on National Sport Organizations' (NSO) governance and less attention has been given to the grass-root sport clubs governance and board operations. Furthermore, the pivotal institutions of the Finnish sport culture have been studied very little (Itkonen, 1996) and the sport management research on grass-root sport clubs in Finland, has mainly concentrated on Finnish grass-root sport organizations' structures and workforce (e.g. Koski, 2009; Koski, 2012; Koski, et al., 2015), or on professionalization of Finnish sport clubs (e.g. Koski & Heikkala, 1998). Fortunately, some research and manuals on sport club governance have been published by Finnish national sport governing bodies and entities (e.g. Koski, 2009; Heikkinen, 2010; Allianssi, Soste & Valo, 2015; Ojajärvi & Valtonen, 2016). Hence, as majority of Finnish grass-root sport clubs are associations, manuals for good governance in associations (e.g. Rosengren & Törrönen, 2008) and the Finnish association law can be used to assess the governance of Finnish grass-root sport clubs. However, there is a research gap in sport management research, that concentrates on grass-root sport clubs' governance, and how voluntary boards implement the virtues of good governance, or whether the implementation of such practices are ever applied in board rooms. Hence, this qualitative thesis focuses on single successful grass-root sport organization's, Jyväskylän naisvoimistelijat [Jyväskylä Women Gymnasts] (JNV), Board and investigates what good governance practices can be found from the Board's operations and how the Board could operate even higher level.

As mentioned above, only a small number of national and fewer international sport management studies have concentrated on grass-root sport organizations' governance. Therefore, the theoretical implications, to explain and mirror the governance of JNV and the Board's practices to good governance, are mainly drawn from the international studies on NSOs. Additionally, the club and the Board is described through and evaluated against the national manuals and research on good governance. Furthermore, to create a holistic view of the research subject, I use the club's documents and Board Members and the Executive Manager's semi-structured interviews.

1.1 Personal interest

Sport has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I was a member of a Finnish grass-root sport club my entire childhood to late adolescents, when my role in that club changed and I became an employee. The club's Board always fascinated me and later when I was an employee, I realized how much the Board's decision affected my work. Later in life, I was fortunate enough to be employed by a grass-root sport club in Switzerland, and discovered how the Board's decisions, again, affected my daily work.

When I was pondering ideas of a research topic that I would investigate in my Master's thesis, I remembered my initial fascination towards the Board of my *home club* and realized that I had found my topic. Whilst searching research related to my research topic, I stumbled across a study by Ferkins and Shilbury (2012) where they mapped out four strategic capability signposts for National Sport Organizations' boards. The four signposts that Ferkins and Shilbury mapped out were *capable people*, *frame of reference*, *facilitative board processes* and *facilitative regional relationships*. The strategic capability signposts gave a good starting point for my investigation, and a base, which I could build most of the theoretical framework upon and use to formulate my research questions. Without Ferkins' and Shilbury's (2012) research, my thesis would be something completely different or furthermore, this thesis would probably not exist.

1.2 Structure of this thesis

In the chapter 2, I introduce the Finnish sport club context from JNV's viewpoint as well as make a case why JNV can be considered a successful grass-root sport organization. Chapter 3 introduces the aim, purpose, and the research question and problems that acted as a foundation for the interview guide. In chapter 4 I describe the methodology behind my research, more precisely how and why I chose the research methods to investigate this subject. Additionally, chapter 4 tells how the research proceeded, from formulation of the interview framework, data collection and deciphering the data; and, I touch on the ethics, reliability, and validity of this research.

I introduce the main findings of this research in chapter 5, and simultaneously reflect them to the findings of Ferkins and Shilbury (2012). In addition to the main framework, or more precisely strategic capability of a VSOs' boards, in each subchapter, I reflect how the Board's practices correspond with the contemporary research on board effectiveness,

performance, organizational structure, board member roles, and make remark of the good governance practices that possibly make JNV successful.

Finally, in chapter 6, I conclude how this thesis served its aim and purpose, as well as outline the where JNV's governance currently stands compared to research and literature. Chapter 6 also includes suggestions how the Board could improve the different practices to make the governance of the club more efficient and the Board to perform in a higher level. Additionally, in chapter 6, I contemplate the limitations of this research and make suggestions for future research.

2 JYVÄSKYLÄN NAISVOIMISTELIJAT: A SUCCESSFUL FINNISH GRASS-ROOT SPORT CLUB

In this chapter, I describe Finnish grass-root sport club context and sport clubs' role in Finnish society from JNV's viewpoint. I also make claims, why JNV is successful and thus an appropriate subject for this qualitative case study.

In Finland, sport, competitive and recreational, has a significant role in the Finnish society (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012). In the past, voluntary forces implemented most of the organized sports and physical activity and today volunteer associations and civic sector forms the base for Finnish physical culture (Koski, et al., 2015). Currently, there are approximately 10 000 sport clubs in Finland (Koski, 2012) where yearly over a million Finns take part activities the clubs provide (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012).

JNV is a Finnish grass-root sport and recreation club, situated in Jyväskylä. Founded in 1917, the club offers gymnastics and other forms of physical activities to its close to 2000 members ("Seura," n.d.). Interestingly, as an average size of Finnish sport clubs has decreased (Koski, 2009), JNV is one of the largest sport clubs in Finland ("Seura," n.d.). Reflected to the average size clubs in Finland and the development of statistics regarding small clubs, although the statistics are a decade old, JNV is a giant with its close to 2000 members, as well as a special case. In fact, in 1996, the average number of members in a club was 328, whereas in 2006 the number of memberships was 292. Number of small clubs, few dozen memberships or less, has increased over the last years, and the proportion of small clubs is relatively large in Finland. In 2006, one-third of Finnish sport clubs had the maximum of 100 members. (Koski, 2009.)

Children's sport is the foundation of high performance sports in Finland, and its main function and role of club activities is well renowned. Simultaneously, increasing amount of sport clubs exclude adults' high performance sports from their nuclear goals. National level competitive sports, in the core of sport clubs, have deep-rooted traditions and a long history. (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012.) In JNV, competitive section is one of the two core operational entities. JNV's competitive section provides aesthetic gymnastics and

competitive aerobics coaching for children, adolescents and young adults (“Seura,” n.d.) and thus follows the traditional Finnish high performance sport delivery tradition. The gymnasts in JNV compete in various national levels and the club’s jewel is the aesthetic gymnastics team *Sirius* that competes on international arenas and aims to represent Finland in the World Championships (“Millainen laji,” n.d.). Although the trend in Finnish sport clubs is to exclude adults from high performance from their nuclear goals (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012), JNV has aesthetic gymnastic teams for women, and in fact, the oldest gymnasts in the team *Sirius* are 22-year-olds. Hence, JNV does not follow the current trend (see Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012) and offers opportunities for adults to participate in high performance sports.

European clubs, including Finnish sport clubs (see Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012), offer the main source of sport instruction and participation for people of all ages, skill level and interest (Mull, et al., 1997). Alike sport clubs in Finland and the rest of Europe, JNV offers vast amount of recreational activities for its members, regardless of age. In fact, recreation is second of the core functions of JNV (“Seura,” n.d.). The recreation section provides various recreational fitness classes throughout the year, offers recreational gymnastics and dance classes for all ages. Additionally, the club takes part in the Finnish Gymnastics Federation’s (Suomen voimisteluliitto) pilot project, *Ikiliike* that aims to increase the number of physically active senior citizens and get them involved in gymnastics activities. (“Harrasteliikunta,” n.d.) Considering the amount of recreational physical activity possibilities that the club offers to its members, JNV is a textbook example of a Finnish sport club.

JNV has a typical number of fields of operation, or i.e. independent operational groups, for a Finnish sport club (see Koski, 2009). The Fields of Operation that form JNV’s operational base, are *recreational family sports, gymnastics school, dance, competition and coaching* (comprises of aesthetic gymnastics and competitive aerobics), and *adults’ recreation*. Each Field of Operation Team has a representative on the board (Hallitus, n.d.). Additionally, the club has a marketing and communication team whose task is to make JNV known by carrying out active, up-to-date, and versatile communication and marketing. JNV employs five people; an Executive Manager, manager of recreational sports, and manager of youth coaching, office secretary, and an accountant. (Jyväskylän naisvoimistelijat, 2014.)

There are number of reason why I consider JNV to be a successful grass-root sport club. JNV has a long, centenarian, history of organizing gymnastics in Jyväskylä. Additionally, the club has a high-performance aesthetic gymnastics team that competes in national and international arenas and offers high performance sports for adult gymnasts. The club has close to 2000 members, which makes it one of the largest gymnastics clubs in Finland and largest in Central Finland (Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat 100 vuotta, n.d.). In addition to the structural merits that JNV has, other determinants of success, are the acknowledgements from Finnish national sport governing bodies. JNV has the Finnish Sport Confederation's (Valo) Sinettiseura –certificate (Seura, n.d.), for being active, driven by development, and being the best in its discipline and the best club in Jyväskylä (Sinettiseurat, n.d.). Furthermore, the Finnish Gymnastics Federation has acknowledged the quality of JNV's operation by admitting JNV the Priima –certificate (Seura, n.d.), for the club's achievements in organizing quality recreational and health enhancing physical activities for adults. Not only is the Priima –certificate a promise of quality, but also an honour for the club that receives it. ("Priima-seurat," n.d.) Referring to the merits on the operational side of the club and to acknowledgements admitted by Valo and the Finnish Gymnastics Federation, I argue that JNV is a successful and functional grass-root sport club.

Additionally, JNV is an interesting sport club to investigate because of its orientation, namely, gymnastics and more accurately women's gymnastics. The name of the club, Jyväskylän naisvoimistelijat, in English, Jyväskylä Women Gymnasts, refers to the core upon which the club was originally founded on. Women's gymnastics has long traditions in Finland. Furthermore, the importance of women's gymnastics to Finnish sports actualizes in the fact that it one of the two internationally recognised sports created in Finland. Aesthetic gymnastics, that originates from women's gymnastics, world championship has been held regularly since the year 2000. (Sarje, 2012.) Moreover, over the course of women's gymnastics' history, it has been able to hold its non-competitive status in sport clubs, when other sports have developed towards competitiveness (Itkonen, 1996).

3 PURPOSE, AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This qualitative case study's purpose was to describe the governance practices of a successful Finnish grass-root sport club and find traits which indicate that the club's governance follows the good governance practices determined in contemporary research and descriptive literature. When I was reading sport management and governance related literature to find a right subject to study, I came across an article by Ferkins and Shilbury (2012), where they mapped out directional signposts to determine strategic capability of NSOs' boards. The signposts of strategic capability in Ferskins' and Shilbury's (2012) research were *capable people*, *frame of reference*, *facilitative board processes* and *facilitative regional relationships*. After reading the study, I was certain that this was a viewpoint in grass-root sport clubs' management research that needed to be investigated further, and therefore I decided to base the theoretical framework to the study of Ferkins and Shilbury (2012). Since Ferskins and Shibury (2012) studied NSOs, I had to make minor adjustments to make the framework applicable for grass-root sport club, and for that reason, I used three of the directional signpost *capable people*, *frame of reference*, *facilitative board processes* (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012), that are also the base of the research question and problems

The formulation of the research question started after I had chosen the proper research method. Because the purpose of my research was to provide knowledge of grass-root sport club, the aim of my research was to report what traits of good governance could be found from the Board and give an overall view of the Board's operations. I formulated following research question to best fulfil the aforementioned purpose and aim:

What traits good governance can be found from a successful, Finnish sport and recreation sport club's board?

In order to investigate each component of governance in depth, I divided the general research question to several research problems, which based on contemporary literature and research on the field of sport governance and management. The research problems were:

1. What are the skills, expertise, and experience requirements, and how new Board Members are recruited?
2. What are the main tasks and objectives of the board and the club, and how do they affect decision-making?
3. Which factors do (e.g. Board Members) affect the formulation of strategy?
4. What does facilitate and/or hinder the board's work?
5. How clear are the roles and responsibilities within the board?
6. How does the board commit and motivate its members, and what are individual Board Members motivations to board work?
7. How do the members of the board perceive the atmosphere and interpersonal and –group relationships of the board?
8. How is power and leadership divided within the board?
9. How does the board evaluate itself, its members, and development of its processes and performance?

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

After I found appropriate framework, that I could apply my existing idea of sport club governance, I started to draft a research design and a my quest for suitable methodology. The right methodological direction soon appeared and with the connections of the University of Jyväskylä, I connected with a grass-root sport club that I could study. During the following months, I formulated the research question and problems and made proper steps to prepare for data collection and analysis. There were some difficulties in data collection, but I eventually managed to collect adequate amount of data to analyse. Furthermore, as I did not have prior connections to the club, I was capable to attain unbiased view of the club's governance that helped me to analyse the data from outsider's perspective. Although the Interviewees were complete strangers to me, I was satisfied how all interviews had a conversational and relaxed tone that carried out throughout the interview process. In addition, technology did not fail me, and I was able to record and keep the data safe throughout the whole research project.

In the following subchapters, I describe how I found an appropriate method, and how I collected and analysed data to answer my research problems. In addition, I touch on the ethics and validity of my research.

4.1 Research design and methodology

As the subject of this thesis was one grass-root sport club's board and for the fact, the aim was not statistical generalizations, I therefore chose qualitative research over quantitative research. More importantly, I wanted to understand the governance practices of the club's board, and thus found that qualitative research would provide a more descriptive view of the club's governance. Furthermore, qualitative research would possibly give me a chance to understand and provide theoretically pleasant interpretation of the chosen club's governance (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009).

After choosing qualitative research, I decided to utilize case study method, since I had a single VSO's board, under my investigation. I had a desire to gather detailed and intensive knowledge about one case, a Finnish grass-root sport club, hence I concluded that a case

study method would serve the purpose of my research the best possible way. (Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara, 2014.) As methodology literature suggests, qualitative research aims e.g. to understand specific actions, in my research, a grass-root sport club's governance (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). Therefore, logically, I personally approached informants, from the case club, who would have the most knowledge and experience of the club's governance, i.e. Board Members and the Executive Manager of the club.

4.2 Data collection

To answer the research problems, I used more than one data collection method, which, in qualitative research, there are various (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009; Hirsjärvi, Sajavaara & Remes, 2014). To get a holistic view of the Board of the club, I gathered the data for my research with individual interviews, attended one board meeting, and examined a few documents that the club had previously produced. Although, I would have been able to utilize all data collecting methods individually, simultaneously or I could have been able to combine them in different ways (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009), I decided to conduct the interviews first to get acquainted with the interviewees before observing them in a board meeting. After data collection, I attended one regular, monthly, board meeting, where I could observe how accurately the interviewees described the Board, its members, and processes. Finally, when writing the dissertation, I familiarized myself to the club's annual action plan and report, and to the rules of the club, to see how well documented the Board's rules and practices, and Board Member roles, etc., were.

As theme interviews, i.e. semi-structured interviews, are the main way of collecting qualitative data (Brinkman, 2008), I chose semi-structured interviews to collect part of the data for my research. Since, my aim was to investigate what was happening in the boardroom during meetings, what the Board Members and the Executive Manager were thinking, and how they acted in board meetings, interviews were the most likely and beneficial method (e.g. Firmin, 2008; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009) to collect the data. In other words, I asked directly about the issues above from the people present in the board meetings. Another reason for me to choose interviews to collect data was the flexibility of an interview (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009; Hirsjärvi, Sajavaara & Remes, 2014). I knew, based on methodology literature (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009), that during interviews, I would have a chance to repeat questions, correct misunderstandings, rephrase expressions and have a discourse with the informant. I was convinced that the flexibility

of interviews would help me to gather in-depth information and hear each informants' interpretations of the club's governance.

After choosing semi-structured interviews as a data collection method, I familiarized myself to the existing literature over the spring and summer 2015, respectively. In autumn 2015, I developed an interview guide, that based on the research question and on relevant theory of sport governance and management (Ayres, 2008) or in other words, I established the interview guide on pre-selected interview themes, that were based on the framework of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). When the first version of the interview guide was ready, I staged a test interview with another sport club's vice chair of the board. With the help of the test interview, I evaluated the time needed to complete the interviews, the pre-selected themes and questions. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2014.)

After the test interview, some minor adjustments to the interview guide were needed and made in late autumn 2015. Then, it was time to schedule the interviews with the Board Members of the club. As I approached the case club, whose Board Members and Executive Manager were supposed to be the informants, I faced difficulties and as a result parted ways with the club. Luckily, I found a new equally successful grass-root sport and recreation club, JNV, on a short notice. Due to the change of target organization, some minor adjustments needed to be made to the existing interview guide. For ethical and recruitment reasons, I informed possible Interviewees the theme which the interviews were regarding (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009), by sending the board of JNV a letter (Appendix 3) that explained what the main focus of my research was, and what their rights as participants were if they decided to take part in the research. As a result, the board of JNV agreed to take part in my study in the end of November 2015.

Qualitative research does not aim to statistical generalizations, but rather, describes a phenomenon or an event, understand a specific action or give theoretically pleasant interpretation to some phenomenon. Thus, it was important to select informants who had the most knowledge and experience about the governance and board of JNV. Therefore, I approached the Board Members and the Executive Manager of JNV for an interview, as they all fulfilled the afore-mentioned criteria. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009.) Although an interview was proposed to all JNV Board Members and the Executive Manager,

subsequently I arranged and completed interviews with seven out of ten possible participants. The potential Interviewees that I did not interview did not answer the interview request, or the possible participants and I had scheduling issues. To ensure the maximum volume of information during the interviews, I sent an adapted interview guide (Appendix 3) to the Interviewees a couple of days before their respective interviews, so that they could become acquainted with the interview questions and themes in advance (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009).

I conducted the interviews, in Finnish language, during December 2015. The Interviewees and I scheduled the interviews according to the informants' personal schedules. All but one interviews took place in a closed space, with only the Interviewee and myself present. Due to space limitations, one interview had to be scheduled to the university café. After the first interview, it came to my knowledge that JNV did not have a strategy in place, but that the board was in the midst of the strategy formulation process. Once discovering the lack of strategy, I adapted the interview guide once more, to match the club's current situation. Because of the discovery in the first interview, I used the final version of the interview guide (Appendix 2) in rest of the interviews. Based on the test interview, the estimated interview duration was approximately 60 minutes. Eventually, the shortest interview took 46 minutes and the longest 100 minutes.

After conducting a couple of interviews, I began to have some indication about how to ask certain question so that the Interviewees would understand them correctly. I did not phrase all questions as they stood on the interview guide, but phrased them in a more conversational manner to keep the interview situation light and casual. During the interviews, I also tried to listen the answers carefully, trying to avoid asking a question that the Interviewee already gave an answer to earlier. During some interviews, I did not have to ask all questions and I could change the order of the questions as well. (Ayres, 2008; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009; Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2014.) To keep the interviews conversational, I gave the Interviewees a chance to describe their perceptions, of e.g. the board, spontaneously (Brinkman, 2008). In some interviews, I utilized the opportunity that interviews provide, and asked clarifying questions, corrected misunderstandings, rephrased expression, and repeated questions (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). I considered that using the afore-mentioned manoeuvres helped the Interviewees to provide me the information that I needed for the research.

Since I did not want to depend only on my notes that I made during the interviews, I recorded the interviews with an audio recording device, borrowed from the university. My decision was also affected by the fact that words were substantial in qualitative research and because of the importance of the choice of words, metaphors, taking only notes during an interview would not suffice for qualitative data collection (Firmin, 2008). The benefit of audio recording facilitated the interviews, data analysis and integrity of the research. I felt that I could concentrate better during the interviews, and while I was taking notes, I knew that I would not miss the intent behind what the Interviewees were saying. Recording also helped me to be mentally present and show the Interviewees that I cared about what they were telling me. Additionally, having an audio record of the interviews helped me later to conduct an in-depth analysis of the informants' statements and make comparisons between the Interviewees. Finally, the audiotaping secured the integrity of the data. No data was lost and audio recording captured the true essence of the Interviewees' intents. (Firmin, 2008.)

After the interviews were completed, I partook a monthly JNV board meeting and made notes. I decided to collect the data by observing one board meeting, because it is the second common data collection method in qualitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009) and there was a chance that it could give me immediate and direct knowledge about the actions and behaviour of the Board Members and the board meetings (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2014). Connected to the conducted interviews, observing one monthly board meeting gave me an opportunity to see the Board Members and the Executive Manager in a real boardroom setting, as well as a versatile view of the entire case. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009.) During the board meeting that I observed, I did not participate and the participants knew that they were taking part to my study. Due to the observation, I felt that I could draw a clear picture about the group dynamic of the board and understand the relationships between Board Members better, opposed to only conducting the interviews.

4.3 Data analysis

As I used ATLAS.ti software for data analysis, I transcribed the whole interviews verbatim after I completed the last interview (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2014). The raw analysis of the data started from the moment I started transcribing the interviews verbatim, as I made notes from the interviews during the transcribing process. Once

completing the transcripts, in mid-February 2016, I started reading them closely and highlighting themes that rose from the data.

Soon after finishing reading the last interview transcript, I uploaded all transcripts to ATLAS.ti software. Even though I began the data analysis before inserting the transcripts to the computer software, I decided to use ATLAS.ti computer software, because of its ability to help searching for codes and categorize large amount of interview data (Yin, 2009). With the help of the interview guide and new themes that appeared during the analysis, I began dividing quotations under pre-existing codes, themes, and to new codes and themes rising from the interviews. Fortunately, I had made thorough work during the interview preparation phase, and had a clear view what to search for from the transcripts and therefore diverted the problem of not knowing what to look for from the vast amount of data (Yin, 2009). I continued analysing the data while reporting the result of the study and went back to the original transcripts and the notes that I had made during the interviews and when first reading the interview transcripts.

4.4 Reliability and validity of the research

Although growing up in a Finnish grass-root sport club environment, I did not have concrete experience from grass-root sport club governance prior to this study. However, due to my experience from club operations, as an employee i.e. as a coach, from Finland and abroad, I had a clear understanding how the governance affects the operation of the entire club. Before the initial contact to JNV in late November 2015, the club was foreign to me, nor had I prior connections to JNV.

I sent the interview questions to the Interviewees prior to their respective interviews to ensure that they had time to prepare for the interviews and to see what type of questions they could expect. Despite the fact, that the Interviewees received the question before the Interviewees, I had to, during some interviews, elaborate some questions. However, overall the interview questions were clear for the Interviewees, and I was able to collect the necessary data. There were no complications during the interviews, and all informants answered all questions willingly. To avoid distractions, I situated the Interviewees in the closed interview space so that they faced me and saw outside the window, since there was a window, to the hallway of the library, on the door of the interview space. I scheduled the only interview in an open space to early morning, to minimize distractions. The audio

recording device functioned properly, and I did not use a backup device, nevertheless, there was a mobile phone with built-in audio recorder, fully charged in case of malfunction of the primary audio recording device. After each interview, I saved the audio file on my personal computer's hard drive and on my USB drive, and on a cloud memory service, and removed the file from the audio recorder device's memory card. I used my personal computer's hard drive and the USB drive, and the cloud memory service to store the verbatim transcripts as well as the themes and codes retrieved from the interview data.

When JNV and I established the research co-operation, we made an agreement regarding the participants' anonymity, and that the board would decide the extent of information presented, in the dissertation about the club, after presenting the preliminary results to the Board of representatives. I presented the preliminary results in a board meeting in April 2016. After my presentation, the board gave me full authority to use the club's name and public information, however the Board did not authorize me to connect the Board Members' names to the quotations. In other words, the names of the Interviewees' are not published in this thesis. The interviews are presented in codes, e.g., *Interview 1*, that I randomly selected for each Interviewee. The random coding will further protect the anonymity of the Interviewees.

The result section on this thesis contains direct quotations in Finnish. I personally translated the quotations from Finnish to English, without using external help. I was confident being qualified to translate the quotations after studying English in school from 10 to 19-years-of-age. Additionally, during my studies at the University of Applied Sciences in Finland, I took several English language courses. Finally, and most important qualification was that, I finished an English proficiency test, TOEL, in spring 2013 with a high mark, and the language of the master's degree programme, of which this thesis is a part of at the University of Jyväskylä, was in English. To ensure the rightfulness of the quotation translations, my thesis supervisor checked the quotation translations. The interviews were conversational, and therefore the language in the transcripts, is everyday spoken language, and contains Finnish slang and dialect words. For this reason, I edited the quotations to make them compact and clear, but not extensively, to retain the essence the intended message that each quotation contains.

5 MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Although this thesis does not exclusively concentrate on strategic capability, it seems appropriate that first three sections of this chapter are named after the strategic capability cornerstones, *capable people*, *frame of reference* and *facilitative board processes* (Ferkins & Shibury, 2012), that initially gave me the idea for this research. In addition to the leading framework, I use existing contemporary sport management and governance research and literature to further investigate and explain the Board and governance of JNV.

Each subchapter has its main theme that describes different aspects of voluntary grass-root sport club's governance. In each subchapter, I present the main findings from the interviews and simultaneously reflect them to the current sport governance and management research and literature.

5.1 Capable people

Majority of sport clubs elect officers, when they recognize the necessity for leadership and that there are mandatory tasks to conduct for the club to function (Mull, et al., 1997). In JNV, the situation seems to be exactly as mentioned above. Board composition, number of members, roles, and duration of terms are determined in the JNV's rule 11§ about the governance of the association.

11§ Association's governance

The association is governed by the board that is lawfully elected by the spring general meeting. The Board consists of a chair, who is elected for one term at a time and eight Board Members that serve two terms at a time. The Board selects yearly a vice chair and a secretary amongst its ranks, and names other necessary appointees. Each year half of the Board Members must resign. Resigning Board Members are determined first by draw, then by turn. ("Säännöt", n.d.)

JNV is large, close to 2000 memberships, and its operations are extensive. Over the years, the Boards of JNV have established positions to ensure the continuity and functionality

of the club's operations. The question is whether the current Board has been able to place right individuals, i.e. *capable people*, in those positions. Having and recruiting capable individuals on the board ensures the collective capability of the board, which contributes to e.g. strategic capability of the board (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). In this section, I present the main findings regarding the individuals that currently (2015) sit on the Board of JNV and how new members are selected, and reflect and discuss the findings to literature and research. Additionally, under investigation are the skills and expertise a person needs to possess to sit on JNV's board.

The level of education was quite similar amongst the Interviewees but occupations, in their personal lives, varied. All Interviewees had a degree from Finnish upper secondary school and most of them had a degree from higher education as well i.e. a bachelor's or master's degree. Occupations of the Interviewees varied between a PhD candidate, to a marketing designer to a psychiatric nurse. One Interviewee was a student in a university and another was a pensioner.

It seems that the level of education of JNV Board Members mirrors the change in the Finnish society; the increased level of education in Finland has resulted a higher level of expertise in sport clubs (Koski, 2012). Although, level of education might be the most visible in the operational section of Finnish sport clubs, increased level of education might also affect the education degree on JNV's board.

As mentioned above, only one Interviewee did not have at least a bachelor's degree. However, working on a VSO's board also requires specific knowledge about the organization and the sport. Even though the occupations of the Board Members do not affect the work on the Board directly and are not a prerequisite for a selection on the Board, some members have responsibilities that reflect their civilian occupations. It seems that JNV has responded to consumers', or in sport club context club members', demand for high quality services (Koski, 2009), by selecting Board Members that have specific expertise and know-how that might increase the level of the organization and its operations. For instance, a Board Member who was a marketing designer is a member of the marketing team and a Board Member with a secretarial education holds the secretary's position on the current board. Furthermore, a member, who had a long history in JNV as

an athlete, was the *competition and coaching* Field of Operation Team representative on the Board.

Majority of the Board Members entered the club, as gymnasts, gymnasts' parents or as hobbyists. One Interviewee was an employee in JNV before her election on the Board. All Interviewees were involved with the club for several years, earliest since 1994. The Interviewees did not possess experience from another sport clubs or associations as members or Board Members, but majority of them had board work experience outside of JNV. Two Interviewees had board experience from school boards, one of them was a vice-chair of a school board, another a member and a chair of a condominium board, all together 15 years, and a third had experience as a member of a labour union board. Considering that majority of the Interviewees had experience of work board work outside JNV, the Board, as a unit should assumingly had clear understanding of its legal duties, responsibilities, and liabilities as these factors are essential for the functioning of the Board. (Palmer, 2011.)

All Interviewees had several years of history with JNV, therefore, arguably, the Board Members were familiar with the club and its operations in a general level. The fact that the Interviewees only had experience from one sport and sport club, might have affected their capability to understand sport and recreation from multiple perspectives and result in uneducated decisions. Additionally, some Interviewees' level of understanding, e.g. high performance sport, emerged later during the interviews and I will discuss that topic in following sections of this thesis.

Additionally, e.g. legal duties and liability of the Board of JNV are determined in the Finnish association law (see L 26.5.1989/503) that also binds the associations that JNV Board Members have been members in. Therefore, the members of JNV's board are probably capable of understanding the responsibilities, legal duties and liabilities, which might be one of the factors of the functionality of the Board and therefore the successfulness of the entire organization.

Two of the Interviewees started on the Board recently, namely, when the Board was previously appointed, in the beginning of 2015, whereas other Interviewees had been on the Board for several terms. Although two out of six Interviewees joined the Board

recently, the other of the two Informants' served on the Board in the past, before taking time off due to work related issues. Therefore, considering her previous terms on JNV's board, she was as a long-term Board Member. Other Interviewees entered the Board between nine and three years ago. One Interviewee started as a gymnast in 1999 and later progressed to the Board after turning the required 18-years of age. Another Interviewee entered the club as an employee and then moved to the Board, and third started as an instructor in the club, then took a position on the Board, discontinued the Board Membership midterm to take a position as an employee in the club, before re-entering the Board a few years later. One of the Interviewee had children taking part in JNV's club activities and she was an active parent in the operational side before entering the Board. Almost all Interviewees had served on the Board and were committed to the board work for longer period, which is a common situation in Finnish sport clubs, where the fluctuation in formal governing bodies is minor (Ojajärvi & Valtonen, 2016). As mentioned above, most members on the JNV's board were long-time Board Members; therefore, it is unclear whether the resigning rule (see "Säännöt") is applied.

The Interviewees had various reasons why they ended up on the JNV board. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, majority of the current Board Members entered the Board through being an active club member. One Interviewee entered the club's operations through employment without any prior attachment to gymnastics and later became a Board Member. The Board specifically asked majority of the Interviewees to join the Board and many Interviewees mentioned that a sitting Board Member personally contacted them when a seat was opening on the Board. Only one Interviewee had expressed interest being on the Board before she was approached by the then sitting Board.

Reasons why the sitting Board approached current members, to join JNV's board, differed. However, a similarity was that all Interviewees mention their history with the club, and certain knowledge and expertise that they had gained while being in the club's operations. All Interviewees agreed that they attained knowledge and skills, while being members or employees of the club, that were essential for operating on the Board in the position that they were appointed to.

JNV's board's procedure of electing new Board Members is in line with the sport governance literature that suggests, that Board Members should be elected because of their abilities rather than time served in the organisation or political favour. (Palmer 2011.) Still, the sitting board asked majority of the members to join the Board. This is in contradiction with the literature and suggests that the people on the Board of JNV were elected also, for who they were. Even though all Interviewees had a long history in JNV, the importance of knowledge and abilities came through from the answers, rather than time served in the organization. Moreover, the Interviewees were selected on the Board because the, then sitting, Board supposedly saw a use of certain skills that the Interviewees had at the time. I might even speculate, that the then sitting board used pre-existing board profiles to identify new Board Members, i.e. the Interviewees, to bring new or needed skills on the Board of JNV, which can be interpreted to be a sign of an effective board. (Hoye, 2002.)

While the Interviewees mentioned that it is their knowledge and skills that made them Board Members, none of them had any experience from other sport clubs and thus knowledge about how other sport clubs were organized and governed. It seems that a long history of being an active member of the club, although the Interviewees did not emphasize this factor, might play part in the selection process. Interviewees, who had not retained relevant expertise from of occupation or education, had attained their expertise and knowledge from being involved with the club's operations prior to their selection to the Board.

Arguably, the Interviewees might have had expertise and know-how about the operational side of JNV, but had limited skills in understanding sport and recreation, which might have made them make informed decisions that concern the whole club and not only their own respective Field of Operation. Lacking the experience from other sport organizations might have also affected the Interviewees' level of working knowledge of the multiple ways they could improve the governance of JNV, namely managing and reducing risks in decision-making and daily operations. Hence, it is a necessity that the people who are on the Board of JNV have the necessary skills and abilities to make strategic decisions about JNV. (Palmer, 2011.) It is clear the Interviewees were familiar with their organization, but it is unclear whether they possessed the necessary skills to make strategic decisions. To many Interviewees, strategy was a difficult topic during the

Interviews, which indicates that the Interviewees are not too familiar with strategy as a concept. I will discuss strategy and the strategy formulation process later in chapter 5.2.3 more in-depth.

5.1.1 Recruiting new members

Finding new members had been challenging for the Board in the past, with an exception of last election (2015) when there were more candidates than vacant seats. Having excess Board Member candidates was an unusual situation, because many Interviewees mentioned that there was no a backlog of people interested in occupying the seats on the Board, in the past. Two Interviewees expressed the situation about the amount of people interested in board work in JNV in previous years and last year in the quotations below, respectively.

“Ei sinne varmaan hirveesti tunkua ole” (Interview 1) [There’s probably no backlog.]

“Yleensä on ollu sellanen tilanne, ettei aivan kauheesti ruuhkaa oo ollu [hallitukseen] mutta esimerkiksi viimevuonna oli enemmän halukkaita tulossa, kun mitä oltas sitten paikkojen perusteella tarvittu [...]” (Interview 5) [Usually the situation has been so that there has not been tremendous amount of traffic [to the Board] but for example last year there was more people willing to come on board that we would had needed based on the seats.]

Alike JNV, sport clubs in Finland face the same reality of difficulty of finding willing and committed volunteers (Koski, 2009; 2012; Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012). The importance of finding people who are willing to, voluntarily, sit on the Board of JNV cannot be disregarded. Volunteers are in the heart of community-based non-profit sport delivery systems in many countries and remain essential to the operation of many organizations, regardless of the trend of professionalization in sport administration through employed staff. The delivery of community-based sports is dependent upon the willingness of vast number of volunteers to give their energy and time. (Cuskelly, McIntyre & Boag, 1998.) Although, in Finland, the total number of volunteers has increased (Koski, 2012; Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012) and people are willing to volunteer, they lack the ability to sustain commitment (Koski, 2012). Moreover, people who volunteer are keener to volunteer in the operational sector of sport clubs, rather than being treasurers or secretaries (Koski, 2012). Some researchers have even called the governance tasks least popular in sport clubs (see Koski et al., 2015). The orientation of Finns’

volunteering interests might explain why JNV's board has had difficulties to recruit new members to the Board. However, the ease of recruiting volunteers to the operational side of JNV was not discussed during the interviews and hence, it is difficult to assess how popular the operational tasks are for volunteers in JNV. Another explanatory factor that might explain the difficulty of finding necessary amount of Board Members is the rule that half of the Board must resign each year, which means that the Board faces the same situation of finding new members frequently.

Research has not found difference in the Board Member selection, namely recruiting, between inefficient and efficient VSOs (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004) and, therefore, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of JNV's board solely based on the recruitment processes. In JNV, sitting Board scouted new Board Members mainly from the ranks of the club. If a seat was becoming vacant on the Board, the member who was leaving the Board or other sitting Board Members started looking and scouting for new members from the group of members who actively participated in the club activities. These candidates could be volunteers, instructors or employees of the club, or past members of the Board. Sitting Board or specific Board Members asked directly from a person who they consider fit for the position, if she had an interest to become a Member of the Board. Usually, new members were looked for a specific position on the Board, or the Board tailored seats to serve the interests of a specific candidate. An Interviewee describes the scouting process as follows

“Ne [jäsenet] valitaan sen kautta että minkälaista tarvetta siinä hallituksessa on että minkälainen toimiala kaippaa niin kun jotain potkua tai uutta vetäjää ja sana kiirii elikkä varmasti näin että puhutaan siellä hallituksessa että oiskohan se mahdollisesti lähdössä ja että se vois sopia tähän tehtävään.” (Interview 3) [They [members] are select on a basis of what type of needs there are on the Board, that which Field of Operation needs some kind of a kick or a team leader and word spreads. Definitely so that we discuss on the Board whether this person might be coming and that this person might be suitable for this position.]

JNV's board is in the right track in member recruitment. The practice of recruiting volunteer Board Members from inside the club is recommendable, because it is probable that those prospective Board Members possess a sense of commitment to organizational goals and values. As a result, the Board of JNV ensures the capability to deliver their services successfully. (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001.) Additionally, recruiting Board Members

from the ranks of active club members, the sitting Board ensures that the new Board Members have basic knowledge about JNV, and do not need an excessive amount of orientation about the club's operation.

Partially due to the elevated interest towards the Board of JNV, before last Board Member election (2015), the Board was able to contemplate the types of people they wanted on the Board, i.e. what type of skills the candidates had and how they would fit the totality of the existing Board. Furthermore, a greater number of candidates enabled the Board to appoint Members based of their skills and divert the problem of having lack of skilled people or an unsuitable mix of skills on the Board (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004). Despite the fact, that the Board had plenty of candidates to choose from in 2015, the reality is that in the pasts, JNV's board had difficulties recruiting adequate number of Board Members, to fill the roles essential for the effective functioning of the organization; a situation that is familiar to many sport organizations (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001).

The Finnish association law (see L 503/1989; Rosengren & Törrönen, 2008) and the JNV club rules: "*The association is governed by the Board that is lawfully elected by the spring general meeting*" (Säännöt, n.d.) determined which entity, e.g. in JNV the general meeting, which consisted of the club's members, officially elected new Board Members. However, in practice, the sitting Board selected the people it considered the best fit on the Board and the general meeting ceremonially confirmed the candidates. None of the Interviewees mentioned any opposition in the election process of new members, in the general meetings. Furthermore, the way that the Interviewees described the recruiting process, especially the way how the Board pondered what type of new Board Members they want on the Board, suggests that the sitting Board selected the new members and the general meeting only verified the selection of new Board Members.

5.1.2 Skills and expertise

The Interviewees saw board work in JNV as a process during which Board Members learn. There were no skill, knowledge, or formal education requirements to be or to become a Board Member of JNV. Knowledge about the club's operations was a desirable quality of a Board Member candidate. More importantly, the emphasis during the recruiting process was on the knowledge about the specific Field of Operation that new Board Member would represent on the Board. Therefore, it was logical that new members

were scouted e.g. from the ranks of the club and not from outside, because they were seen to possess knowledge of their respective Fields of Operation. An Interviewee explained the skill, knowledge, and know-how requirement in the member selection process as follows

“Tietenki sellasta tietämystä seuran toiminnasta ja tai kokemusta joltain [...] meillä on siis iso seura ja monta toimialaa niin sitten toivotaan että joltain toimialalta olis kokemusta joko itse harrastajana tai ohjaajana, valmentajana, vanhempana voimistelijana ja sillä lailla, mutta ei meillä ei varsinaisesti oo ollu sellasta taito tai tieto vaatimusta että pitäis olla jo valmis seuratyön asiantuntija vaan meillä hallituksen jäsenet kehittyvät prosessin aikana siinä kun ovat hallituksessa mukana.” (Interview 5) [Of course knowledge about the operation of the club and or experience from [...] we have a big club and many fields of operations, so we hope that [people] would have experience from some field of operation, either as a hobbyist or instructor, coach, senior gymnast and so on, but we haven’t had any specific skill or know-how requirement, so that you should be a qualified club work expert, quite contrary our members develop through-out the process, while they are on the Board.]

Current Board Members had been in JNV’s club operations as hobbyists, gymnasts and one had acted as a junior gymnastic group’s team leader. The Board Members occupied seats on the current Board according to their “expertise”, working as e.g. a Field of Operation Teams’ leaders for *competitive and coaching*, and *adults’ recreation*, and as a contact person for all gymnastic teams’ leaders. Alike in JNV, in voluntary-based operations, traditions, old habits and collective “wisdom” are usually more utilized sources of know-how than formal institutional education (Koski & Heikkala, 1998).

Despite the fact, that the Interviewees did not mention any specific expertise or knowledge requirements, it seems clear that to become a Board Member a person needs to have some awareness about how JNV operates and knowledge about the Field of Operation that the Board Member is representing on the Board. The Board Members had acquired their expertise during their years in the club, as either club members or as employees. Arguably, all Board Members on the current Board of JNV were experts of their own positions due to the years in the club, and they were supposedly recruited because of the skills and knowledge that they had; a sign of an effective board (Hoye, 2002). Only a few Board Members utilized skills learned outside JNV to contribute to the Board.

As mentioned above, alike voluntary organizations in general, JNV's board did not have qualification requirements of formal education etc., but the Board Member candidates needed to be willing and enthusiastic to work (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). In fact, according to the Interviewees, attitude and commitment were important qualities in a JNV Board Member. More precisely, the qualities that JNV Board Members should have, to be able to work on the Board, were willingness to participate in meetings, desire to bear interest about their respective Field of Operation, willingness to work, and take initiative. Research has found that the most active volunteers, in Finland, share a common appreciation towards industriousness, civil activity, respected position and self-development (Koski, 2009).

Considering the sentiment among the Interviewees, presumably, by recruiting willing and enthusiastic volunteer Board Members, the Board of JNV wants to ensure that the volunteers will complete their tasks without incentive of financial compensation. Additionally, having willing and enthusiastic Board Members might affect the functioning of the Board in general, as motivated, competent, influential Board Members contribute to the effective operation of the organization (Papadimitriou, 1999). The above-mentioned qualities are important for the sake of a functioning organization and commitment of voluntary Board Members. I will discuss in chapter 5.6. how the Interviewees perceive their personal and other Board Members' commitment and motivation to board work.

5.2 Frame of reference of the Board

The Finnish association law mentions a frame of reference, namely an annual action plan that a registered association, alike JNV, is compelled to fulfil. JNV acted accordingly as its regulatory general meeting verified the written annual action plan, along with the estimated budget, based on the annual report, for the following year. Another frame of reference, also for JNV, is an annual report that is a precise description of the past operational term. As stated in the Finnish association law, the general assembly of JNV inspects the annual report and uses it to evaluate JNV's operation. (Rosengren & Törrönen, 2008.) Despite the fact, that the Finnish association law determines planning and setting a frame of reference for an association (see L 26.5.1989/503), it depends on the organization's board how precise they are. Creating a frame of reference is not only mandatory for JNV, but might also be beneficial for the entire organization and especially

for its Board's strategic capability. An organization needs to have a *frame of reference*, or in other words, a road map that determines the boundaries in which the board works within (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). A frame of reference can be a strategy or other defined boundaries, hence, organisational values, mission, vision, strategic plan, operational objectives and key performance measures, legal compliance, risk management, accounting and auditing, reporting and evaluation systems, and performance-review processes should be agreed upon on the board (Palmer, 2011).

In this section, I will share the results and discuss, based on existing literature and research, how familiar the Board Members of JNV were with the tasks and objectives of the Board and the club, and how JNV's board utilized their frame of references. Furthermore, I will share the results about how JNV's board planned the club's operations, what steps was JNV taking towards long-term planning and how that project was progressing.

5.2.1 Tasks and objectives of JNV club and the Board

Majority of the Interviewees thought that the club's purpose is to create joy, experiences and energy for children, adolescent and adults through gymnastics, and, that the operation of the whole club was based on this purpose. Although majority of the Interviewees could name the purpose of the club, a couple of Interviewees had difficulties putting it into words. One Interviewee put the objective into her own words, whereas the other seemed to mix the purpose of the club to the tasks of the Board and the values of the club. Interestingly, looking at the answers about the purpose of JNV more closely, all Interviewees, actually, described the mission of JNV. Mission of JNV was the following,

With the support of gymnastics [JNV brings], joy of life, experiences and energy for children, adolescents and adults.

The purpose of the club is described in the JNV's rules as follows,

3§ Purpose of the association

The purpose of the club is to sustain and develop the physical capability and abilities of gymnasts, increase mental and social wellbeing, support people's mental growth, and provide pleasant experiences.

In spite the fact, that nearly all Interviewees named the same purpose for JNV, it seems that the Interviewees were more familiar with the mission of the club than its core purpose. In fact, some Interviewees admitted that the terminology was difficult for them to understand. Not being completely sure of the meaning of purpose, mission and vision, might have confused the Interviewees, even though they received the interview questions before their respective interviews. Some of the Interviewees familiarized themselves with the questions before their respective interviews, but they still gave the mission of the club, although I asked about the purpose of JNV. Visibility of the purpose and the mission of JNV might explain the confusion. Mission of the club was on the home page of JNV's website ("Tervetuloa hyvään seuraan!"), whereas the purpose of the club was buried in the rules section of the website ("Säännöt"). Notwithstanding, based on the Interviewees' answers, it seemed that the Interviewees were familiar with the core function of the organization.

In Finnish sport club context, and as it should be in JNV, the Board's task is to enforce and utilize the sport club's limited operational capacity efficiently and according to its organizational purpose (Heinilä & Koski, 1991). Furthermore, tasks and duties, such as deciding on a strategy i.e. general outlines of the operation, termination of employment, and creating positions are emphasised (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). Additionally, Finnish association law determines some tasks that an association's board must undertake (see L 503/1989). In JNV, the club's rules determined the core tasks of the Board ("Säännöt"). Many Interviewee mentioned same, the most important, board tasks during the interviews. Below is the list of official tasks of JNV's board.

The Board's task is to

- *Represent the association*
- *Lead the association's operations*
- *Take care of the association's assets and finances*
- *Decide upon employing an Executive Manager and other employees to the association*
- *Convene association general meetings, prepare matters for the general meeting, and implement its decisions*
- *Keep record of memberships*
- *Attain and educate instructors*
- *Carry out an annual financial statement*
- *Formulate and send the required annual statistics to the Finnish Gymnastics Federation*

- *Decide upon handing out the club's patch of honour and make a proposal of other honorary mentions.*
- *Conduct other temporary procedures, demanded by the association law and regulations*

Interpretations of, what the main tasks of the Board were, varied among the Informants. One Interviewee said that that the Board's main task was to make sure, that the staff educated themselves, and to ensure that the status of the club and the quality of its activities stayed at a high level, and that all Field of Operation Teams operated properly. Another Interviewee described the Board as the highest decision-making body of the club that outlined and notified how the club operates. A third Interviewee saw the Board as an extension of the operational side, namely as a helping hand, assuring the achievement of set objectives. Additionally, one Interviewee perceived the Board as an entity that made decision and helps the Field of Operation Teams to fulfil their objectives. Additionally, according to the Interviewees, list of the main tasks of the Board of JNV included formulation of the annual action plan, and decision-making based on it, as well as being a body that took care of the quality and communality, and equal management of the Field of Operation Teams.

Although there were nearly as many interpretations of the main tasks of the Board, it seems that the Interviewees considered *leading the association's operations* as the main task of JNV's board. Although at first it seemed that all Interviewees had a different opinion about the main tasks of the Board, the majority of the answers revolved around the use of power to direct, regulate and control activities within an organization that governance of a VSO, in this case JNV, involves (Palmer 2011).

However, daily operations of JNV arose from the answers quite strongly as well. In the quotes below, Interviewees describe how deciding about issues that are directly related to the operation of the club are a task of the Board

"[...] meillä tehdään aina tuolla kilpavoimistelun puolella joukkuejakoja uudestaan ja sieltä on tullu sitte vanhemmilta viestiä et millä perusteella niitä [ryhmiä] tehdään [...] asia on siis edelleen käsittelyssä mutta kyl mä siitä sanoisin että kun sitä on nyt pohdittu hallituksessa ja sovittu miten asian kanssa edetään [...]" (Interview 5) [...] We are constantly rearranging group consistencies in the competitive gymnastics section and there has been messages from the

parents about how we make them [groups] [...] the situation is still under work, but I would say that after we have pondered about it on the Board and made an agreement how to proceed [...]

“[...] jos tulee esimerkiksi harrastajilta jotakin tai harrastajan aikuisten ohjaajilta jotakin kommenttia et pitäs saaha jotakin laitteita tai pitäs saaha jotain välineitä niin he tuo sen sieltä oman tiiminsä kautta, sen vetäjän kautta sitten hallitukseen että 'hei sinne ja sinne tunnille tarvittas välineitä ja ne välineet on rikki tai joku laite on rikki' tai tälleen. Et sieltä tulee sitten niitä esityksiä.” (Interview 6) [If, for example, an adult hobbyist or the adults [field] instructor signals, that they need equipment or apparatus', they bring it through their own [field of operation] team representative to the Board, that, 'hey we need equipment to this and this class and the equipment are broken or some apparatus is broken' and so on. So, that's how motions end up [to the Board].

The two quotes above indicate that the Board was quite involved with the daily operation of club. It seems that the Board was involved with decisions, which should mainly concern the Field of Operation Teams and the Executive Manager. The Board should rather deal with high-level issues, policy and strategic direction (e.g. Inglis, 1997; Koski & Heikkala, 1998; Shilbury, 2001; Palmer, 2011), accountability and transparency of the organization (Palmer 2011), and concentrate in their governance and leadership responsibilities that include decisions about organizational mission, programmes, financing and their own performance of their own work. Furthermore, the Board should delegate implementation of decisions and directives to the employees of the organizations, whilst monitoring staff performance in execution. (Herman & Renz, 2000.) In other words, the Board should delegate many operational issues to the Executive Manager and to the Field of Operation Teams. For instance, dealing with how coaches divide gymnasts into teams, is the main responsibility of the coaches of the teams and the Board should give them their full support. Even deciding to purchase equipment to a fitness class should be a decision of lower level management and a budgetary issue that is the domain of the Executive Manager of JNV.

One reason for why the Board seemed quite involved with the daily operation of the club might be, that the Board comprised of the Field of Operation Teams' leaders and members. The Board Members were involved with the daily operations of the club through the Field of Operation Teams and hence brought messages from the field to the Board meetings.

Having knowledge and information from the field can be positive in a sense that the Board has information about what is happening on the field and can then act according to that knowledge. However, being highly involved with the club's daily operations and issues on the field might affect the Board's performance negatively if it limits valuable board meeting time from other important board tasks. One Interviewee raised the responsibilities of the Field of Operations Teams and Teams' board representatives, in relation to the Executive Manager and the employed staff at the club's office. The Interviewee emphasised that the Teams should take more responsibility and be more active. Taking more responsibility and being more active, would lighten the Executive Manager's and the office employees work load and let them focus on their actual operational tasks. (Interview 3.) Furthermore, giving and demanding more responsibility from the Field of Operation Teams, might lighten the workload of the voluntary Board of JNV and enable them to focus on overall governance of JNV and tasks listed in the club's rules (see "Säännöt").

Taking care of the club's finances was one of the official tasks of the Board listed in the Board's tasks ("Säännöt") as it should be, according to research (e.g. Herman & Renz, 2000) and Finnish association law (see 503/1989). However, the Interviewees did not mention financial monitoring when they listed the main tasks of the Board. One reason for not acknowledging financial monitoring might be, that the Executive Manager monitors the financial state and oversees the budget of JNV. Moreover, the Executive Manager also briefs the Board in each board meeting about the club's finances, which makes the Board's role in financial monitoring vague. During the board meeting, that I took part in, the Executive Manager shared the latest financial situation with the Board. Understandably, the Board has outsourced finances and budgeting to the Executive Manager, as she has the expertise, and as it usually is the domain of an Executive Manager in of a sport organization (see Koski & Heikkala, 1998).

However, the Board needs to remember that it is the most important actor in financial administration of the association and the final entity responsible for the association's finances. Preparation and implementation of the budget and the financial statement are the responsibilities of the Board and therefore the Board signs the financial statement. (Rosengren & Törrönen, 2008.) Because the Board of JNV is ultimately responsible for the actions of the Executive Manager and hence for the financial state of the entire club,

it needs to monitor the actions of the Executive Manager (Inglis, 1997; Ferkins, et al., 2009; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014.) Hypothetically, left unsupervised, the Executive Manager of JNV could cause substantial damage to JNV's finances. A warning example is another Jyväskylä based sports club, that was a victim of embezzlement (e.g. Jyväskylän kenttärheilijat, 2016; Vuorinen, 2016). In that sports club's case the perpetrator was the club's office employee, not the club's executive manager. However, following the embezzlement, the board of the club in question, changed its financial monitoring and transactions policies (Jyväskylän kenttärheilijat, 2016).

Luckily, according to the Interviewees, the Board of JNV seemed to be aware of the financial situation as it, and the club's budget, arose to discussion during several interviews, as a driving force e.g. in decision-making. Despite the fact, that the Interviewees did not mention financial monitoring when asked about important tasks, being aware of the financial situation was, in fact, quite substantial task that the Board of JNV had. However, based on the interviews, it is difficult to make a conclusion if the Board has created a concrete financial policy, which is one of the most important roles of a VSO board (Shilbury, 2001), but understanding the financial situation and budget is vital for the survival JNV's operations, as couple of Interviewees expressed it.

Strategy or long-range planning are mentioned in sport governance research as one the most important tasks, or roles, of a VSO's board (e.g. Inglis, 1997; Shilbury, 2001; Palmer, 2011). Setting a long-term plan in JNV meant, in December 2015, compiling an annual action plan before each new season. Only one Interviewee mentioned producing an annual action plan, as an important task of the Board. It might be, that because the Board formulated an annual action plan yearly, the Interviewees perceived it as an automatic function, rather than a concrete or an important task of the Board. It is questionable, whether planning, formally, one year ahead, counts as long-term planning and hence whether the Board is fulfilling one of its most important tasks. Interestingly, not having an official strategy or a long-term plan was about to change for JNV. The Board was formulating a strategy for the club (December 2015) and was therefore making a step towards good governance. I will discuss JNV's board's strategy formulation later in chapter 5.2.3.

The official list of tasks of JNV's board included employing an Executive Manager, but the list did not include naming and observing the Executive Manager's activities and the Interviewees did not mention it as a task of the Board. As I discussed the role of the Board and Executive Manager in the financial accountability a few paragraphs ago, monitoring the actions of the Executive Manager is the one of the most important roles of a VSO board (Inglis, 1997; Ferkins, et al., 2009; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014) as well as naming her activities (Inglis, 1997). In JNV, the Executive Manager was not a Board Member, but she sat in the meetings, briefed the Board about the financial situation of the club, and gave her opinions to the issues dealt in the Board meetings. Additionally, she was a member of a Working Committee that prepared agendas etc. for each board meeting.

Despite the fact, that the Executive Manager brings invaluable information from the daily operations of the club, having her in every board meeting for the whole duration of the meeting, might affect how the Board views the Executive Manager and her role in the club. Based on my observations during the board meeting and the interviews the Board relied greatly on the Executive Manager. The relationship is a double-edged sword; the way that the Board maintains ultimate responsibility and control over the actions of the Executive Manager, while simultaneously collaborating with her, requires careful consideration. (Ferkins, et al., 2009; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014.) It might be difficult for the voluntary Board Members of JNV to consider the Executive Manager as a paid employee, which might as a result disrupt the Board's role as the employer and observer of the Executive Manager and her actions.

5.2.2 Strategy in the making

The Board had not set a strategy for the club, but they were involved in a project, organized by the Sport Association of Central Finland Central, Keski-Suomen Liikunta Ry (KesLi), where the club's main objective was to create a strategy for the club. Without a strategy guiding the operation, the Board used the annual action plan, that it compiled each year to plan the next season. During the gymnastics season, the Board of JNV used the annual action plan and the annual report as guidelines for their work and decisions.

The Interviewees mentioned, multiple times in several occasions during the interviews, that especially the annual action plan was their common thread of planning JNV's operations. The notion that JNV's board actually utilized their annual action plan in its

operations and decision-making is positive, since many grass-root sport organizations might consider such document, including a strategic plan as nuisance or forced, or they simply do not have time or resources to actualize the plans (see Sunnari, 2009). The fact that the annual action plan was genuinely used by the Board of JNV, as a touchstone, projects operational performance with considerable benefits for the governance of JNV (see Lussier & Kimball, 2014).

As mentioned above, the Board was in the midst, of a process formulating the first organizational strategy for JNV. There were five Board Members out of nine, including the Chair of the Board and the Executive Manager, who were the most involved with the strategy formulation process. Despite the fact, that many Interviewees said that the strategy was a joint effort of the entire board, some Interviewees noted that the strategy had not been a substantial part of the discourse in board meetings, but rather only discussed in the KesLi project meetings.

Non-existent discourse about the strategy in board meetings is problematic for the Board because collaboration in planning the strategy could make the Board more cohesive and elevate the confidence in the future decision-making (e.g. Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011) as well as develop JNV's board strategic capability (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014). It might be that the Interviewees, who took part in the strategy formulation project, were under the impression that the strategy formulation was a joint effort. However, those Interviewees who did not take part in KesLi project meetings felt that the strategy was a more abstract issue. One Informant said, that not all, of the five, Board Members, who were in the KesLi project group, were always present in the KesLi project meetings. Another Interviewee said that there was no clear decision made of who actually were part of the strategy formulation group, and that there was hastiness present in the whole process. She added that there was not enough in-depth discourse concerning the strategy and that the Board did not use enough time to formulate the strategy during board meetings. (Interview 7.)

The Interviewees' statements of scarce human and time resources, in the strategy development process, are alarming considering that being involved in the strategy development for an organization means that Board Members are demanded more of their time, expertise, and intellectual commitment (Ferkins, Shilbury & McDonald 2009). In addition, to develop its strategic capability, the Board of JNV should increase its part-

time voluntary members' contribution (see Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014), which, according to some Interviewees, seemed not to be 100 per cent, considering that not all Board Members of JNV took part in the KesLi project meetings and the strategy was not a prevalent theme in board meetings. Considering how some Interviewees regarded strategy formulation and how they described the process, from the resource point of view, it is reasonable for me to ponder whether JNV needs a strategy, since grass-root sport organization should consider whether to engage in an excessive strategy planning if it lacks the apt resources (Ferkins, et. al., 2009). JNV has operated successfully 100 years with other types of operational frameworks, hence donating time and human resources to a strategy formulation that not all Board Members are included in, might be a misuse of those precious resources.

The Board and the Chair of the Board were not the only actor in the strategy formulation process. When describing the strategy formulation process, all Informants mentioned that the Board had organized strategy evenings, to where they had invited coaches, club actives, office employees etc. to discuss the club's future and the possible corner stones of the strategy. By utilizing the knowledge from the field, the Board increased its activity to understand the operational details of the organization, and as a result, the Board Members of JNV should be able to make informed strategic decisions. (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014.), or at first formulate a strategy. Listening and understanding the needs and thoughts from the operational sector of the club, might help the Board to form a strategy that is possible to implement in the operational level. Although listening the needs and concerns about the club's future from multiple angles i.e. club actives and employees is important for the sake of the strategy, it might, arguably, also create a cluster of ideas and personal agendas that might be harmful for the strategy formulation process. Having strong personal agendas affecting the strategy formulation process might be harmful and not serve the purpose of the entire club, but rather the ones with more power. On the other hand, in strategy formulation context, listening the operational actors of the club, means that the Board hears what the operational entity needs and formulates the future strategy according to the needs of the entire club, and not only to the need of the Board itself.

Another actor, besides the club's active members and employees, in the strategy development for JNV was the club's Executive Manager. Majority of the Interviewee's

stated, that the Executive Manager had a substantial role in the strategy formulation process. Together with the Chair of the Board, the Executive Manager was the driving force behind the strategy formulation. The following quotes validate the Executive Manager's substantial role in the strategy formulation process as well as how one Interviewee perceived the role of the Chair of the Board and the Executive Manager in the process.

”Toiminnanjohtaja on paljon mukana kyllä ihan kaikessa että hän on myöskin vaikuttava tekijä [strategian muodostamisessa].” (Interview 4) [The Executive Manager takes part in everything, so she is also an influencing actor [in the strategy formulation process]].

”Toiminnanjohtajalla meillä on hirveen iso rooli siinä [strategian muodostamisessa] koska hän on se joka on täyspäiväinen työntekijä siinä.” (Interview 7) [Our Executive Manager has a big role in it [strategy formulation] because she is the full-time employee.]

“[...] mä väitän että se on jäänyt niinku toiminnanjohtajan ja puheenjohtajan keskinäiseksi aikalailla semmoseksi kiireiseksi [...]” (Interview 8) [[...] I claim that it [strategy formulation] has remained between the Chair of the Board and the Executive Manager, somewhat hasty [...]].

Research on strategic capability of voluntary boards suggests that while a board engages in strategic functions and collaborates with its CEO, it needs to be conscious of its other functions, particularly monitoring the work of the CEO. The way that the board maintains ultimate responsibility and control over the actions of the CEO, while simultaneously collaborating with the CEO, requires careful consideration. (Ferkins, et al., 2009; Ferkins & Shilbury, 2014.) The excellence and the expertise of the Executive Manager were emphasised by many Interviewees during the interviews, also during the questions related to strategy formulation process. Considering the nature of the voluntary board, the Board Members of JNV might occasionally forget that they should monitor the actions of the Executive Manager, rather than blindly let her lead the way, also in the strategy formulation. As it appears in one of the quotations above, one Interviewee criticized the strategy formulation process and said that the whole process has more or less been trusted upon the shoulders of the Executive Manager and the Chair of the Board. With the monitoring role of the Board in mind and considering the phase of the strategy formulation process that the Board was in 2015, the Board has to be able to look at the

role of the Executive Manager critically, and evaluate whether her actions are beneficial for the entire club.

5.3 Board processes and practices

Facilitative board processes is the third corner stone of strategic capability and means that the meeting processes need to be sound and that board meetings have a purpose that is align with the agreed organizational strategy (Ferskins & Shilbury, 2012). In this section, I will narrate the main findings, as well as reflect and discuss their relation to the existing literature and research.

The Interviewees saw many factors that facilitated the Board's work. Whether they described it as active, respectful, or understanding, all Interviewees mentioned atmosphere as a factor that facilitated the Board's work the most as well as acceptance and equality among the Board Members. Although many volunteer sport organizations might have deep-rooted difficulties that might interfere good governance, including tensions between paid staff and volunteers (Palmer, 2011), the Interviewees mentioned, in several occasions during the interviews, how great the atmosphere was during board meetings and how well they got along with each other, as well as with the Executive Manager.

Clearly, the Board and the Executive Manager have managed to find a balance and common understanding between the paid staff and volunteers working in the organization and present at the board meetings. I could interpret, that the manner, in which the Interviewees described the atmosphere during board meetings, is a sign of a bond, which is an important aspect of effective governance. Bonding in the boardroom enables the JNV Board Members to collectively mobilize important governance capabilities through the development of common vision, the sharing of information, the building of trust, and hence govern the club effectively. (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012.) In other words, the Board of JNV does not waste time in bickering. Although, they might not always agree, they can work together and solve difficult issues without arguing. One Interviewee describes how the Board pushes through difficult times in board meetings in the following quotation,

“Meillä on ollut sellainen ajatus [hallituksessa] että ollaan niinku huumorin kautta sitten pyritty vähän keventämään asioita ja todettu että ohhoh onpas hankala asia ja sitte joku heittää vähän jonkun mustan vitsin ja kaikki nauraa. Et pikkasen kevennetään et sit sen kautta [kevennetään tunnelmaa kokousten aikana] [...]” (Interview 5) [We’ve had an idea [on the Board] that we have tried to lighten up things with humor and came to conclusion that uh oh this is difficult and then somebody tells a black joke and everybody laughs. So through that we lighten up things [in the meetings].]

Addition to good atmosphere, the Interviewees mentioned several other factors that facilitate the Board’s work. Two Interviewees said that good and clear organizational structure and an action plan facilitated the Board’s work. Furthermore, longevity and long-time Board Members facilitated the Board’s work as well as a capable Executive Manager. One Interviewee mentioned, that if the Board Members would have become acquainted with the materials prior a board meeting it would have made the Board’s work easier. Moreover, according to some Interviewees, a capable Chairperson facilitated the Board’s work. One Interviewee said that the practice of the Chair of the Board making sure that every topic, on the agenda, were discussed by the Board, and the flexibility of the agenda made the Board’s work easier. Some Interviewees mentioned that during board meetings, focusing on the subject at hand and going through the agenda in a certain order were facilitative factors. One Interviewee mentioned the Board’s Facebook group, where the Board Members and the Executive Manager could exchange thoughts, unofficially, was a factor that facilitated the Board’s work, as it kept the Board Members engaged and the club’s affair in their minds between board meetings.

All members on the Board were volunteers and this, according to the Interviewees, set its obstacles. The Interviewees recognised the limitations of the voluntary board, and listed factors such as haste, lack of time, and Board Members’ personal schedules, that hindered the work of the Board. JNV faces the same issues as many organizations and boards that consist mainly of volunteers. Voluntary boards face significant limitations on the time and focused attention individuals can offer to board work. Herein lies the contradiction, the members of voluntary boards, in VSOs, are responsible for organizational outcomes, even though they have limited involvement and hence, potentially, control. (Ferkins, Ferkins, et al., 2009.) The aforementioned elements actualized during JNV board meetings when Board Members arrived late or left during a meeting, or the order of the issues on the agenda had to be changed, in order for the meeting to be quorum, or because

the right Board Members needed to be present, for certain decisions. I could also see the issues that the Interviewees describe during interviews, when I observed the board meeting. The Chair of the Board had to count that the Board was quorum for all decisions, and Board Members were missing, or some went and others came during the meeting. In the club rules, there was a clear definition about quorum board: *board is quorum if at least five board members, out of whom one is either the chair or vice chair, are present* (“Säännöt), alike it is suggested in Finnish sport governance instructions for clubs (Allianssi, Soste & Valo, 2015).

Having clear understanding, before a board meeting, about which Board Member needs to leave early and who is coming late, might facilitate the Board’s work in a sense that the agenda could be built accordingly before the Board meetings, thus making sure that Board Members, who are needed for certain decisions, are present. On the other hand, the Board is a collective and all decisions and operation should be made together. Tailoring the structure of the agenda according to the Board Members’ interests and personal engagements, puts unnecessary weight on the entity preparing the agenda. In JNV’s case the burden was on the shoulders of the Working Committee [työvaliokunta], that comprised of the Chair of the Board, Vice Chair and the Secretary, who were all volunteers, and of the Executive Manager, who was an employee (Hallitus, n.d). Arguably, time and human resources were limited, also in JNV, and thus hindered of the Board’s work.

Limited resources were not the only factor that hinder the work of JNV’s board. One Interviewee perceived quick changes in the operational environment and unexpected events as hindering factors in board operations. Another Interviewee described the same phenomenon in a slightly different way by saying that motions, that rose abruptly during meetings, hindered the Board’s work because of the lack of information and preparation that was essential e.g. in decision-making process. Unprepared motions during board meetings, that the Board Members did not have enough information about, delay decision-making, as they needed to be moved to the next meeting and hence hindered the overall operation of the Board.

The lack of timely information about the club, that the Interviewees experienced, is an issue that might lead to inequality in the ability for an individual Board Member to

participate the discussions during board meetings (Allianssi, Soste & Valo, 2015). The Board is a collective and should be able to make democratic decisions. Not having timely information, or, in the worst case, no or minimal information or knowledge about the situation and decision at hand, might affect the quality of the decisions and to the overall functioning of the Board.

Lack of information was not only restricted to board meetings, but also to the overall structure of the Board. Non-existent and slow transfer of information, whether from former Board Members to their respective successors or amongst Board Members, were hindering factors. One Interviewee perceived the information flow issues a consequence of habits that some Board Members have. For instance, some Board Members did not familiarize themselves with the materials provided before each meeting or simply were not interested in all matters dealt by the Board, which lead to pushing decisions to the next meeting and consequently hindered the Board's work. Board Members missing from meetings lead to the same result, according to another Interviewee. Whether it is missing information and knowledge during JNV board meetings or outside the boardroom, lack of information seems to be the second most common factor that hindered the work and operation of JNV's board, and it was also partially due with the Field of Operation Teams.

Several Interviewees highlighted that the working habits and the sense of responsibility of the Field of Operation Teams' influenced the Board's work negatively. Opinions differed on this matter as one Interviewee was under the impression that the Teams work efficiently, whereas some Interviewees thought, that the teams could take more responsibility and work more efficiently. An Interviewee said, that if all teams would carry more responsibility of preparing motions and research, it would facilitate the work of JNV's board. Another Informant highlighted the different working habits and activity of the Field of Operation Teams. Is time a limiting factor here as well, because of the volunteerism? Couple of Interviewees pointed out that because the club is so large it was difficult to know everything that went on in all Fields of Operations, hence it was a hindering factor, especially in decision-making, because of lack of timely information. This issue is also related to the afore-mentioned statement by another Interviewee, who said, that not all Board Members were interested in every Field of Operation of the club, which might affect their personal commitment and thus the whole functioning of the Board in a hindering manner.

5.3.1 Time management

The Board meetings followed a certain pattern that the agenda dictated. The Board went through routine items swiftly, and used no excess time on them. JNV board meetings took at least two hours, and one Interviewee said that although the pace of the meeting was quite fast, some meetings could take up to two-and-a-half to four hours, or even longer. Another Interviewee mentioned that because people, i.e. Board Members, had jobs, they tried not to waste time during board meetings (Interview 3). Yet another Interviewee had an opposite view and said that the discussion meandered and if everyone would stay on the subject at hand, the meetings would go through faster (Interview 6).

All Interviewees shared the same opinion that discussion and pondering consumed most of the time during board meetings. Difficult issues provoked most discussion and thus took most of the time in board meetings. Even though the Board Members tried to keep the presentations and orations short and the Chair of the Board controlled them, hearing different opinions, discourse, and finding a common opinion on a matter consumed large amount of time. An Interviewee describes the issue as follows.

“Sit jos on vaikeempii kysymyksiä niin sitten keskustellaan pitempään ja yritetään niinku varmistaa että tehdään oikeita päätöksiä.” (Interview 2) [Then, if the motions are more complex, we discuss about them longer and try to make sure that we make the right decisions]

[...] eri mielipiteitten kuuleminen...ja sit ajatusten vaihtaminen ja semmoset yhteisen ymmärryksen etsiminen [vie eniten aikaa]. (Interview 2) [[...] hearing different opinions...and changing thoughts and seeking agreement [are most time consuming]]

New issues and motions, of which the Board did not have prior experience about or the respective Field of Operation Team had not prepared a presentation about, provoked discussion and therefore were time consuming. Difficult matters included employment issues, Field of Operation Teams' finance and facility issues.

Interestingly, e.g. employment and financial issues are on the list of difficult issues that the Board uses the most time during board meetings, since, as mentioned previous chapters, employment issues are one of the most important tasks of a VSO (see Inglis, 1997) along with financial issues (see Shilbury, 2001). It is reassuring to notice that although the Interviewees perceived employment and finances difficult and time

consuming, the Board realised the importance of both and is willing to invest time in them.

One Interviewee said that an additional reason why the Board used a large amount of time to discuss, about issues and matters, was that there were new members on the Board that need to know about the history and background of certain issues, which is time consuming. The rules of the club dictated the turnover of the Board Members (see “Säännöt”). Arguably, a statute that forces half of the Board resign and bring new members on the Board yearly, can, not only affect the time usage during individual board meetings, but also be damaging for the whole governance of JNV. If the turnover is actually as considerable as the rule implies, this is something that the Board should look into.

5.3.2 Agenda

Certain matters were always on the agenda in JNV’s board meetings. Several Interviewees mentioned that the agenda comprised of items dictated by the law, greetings and news from each Field of Operation Team, matters and issues prepared for the respective meeting, budget review, and other matters that were not know when the agenda was prepared.

There were several ways, how a motion entered the agenda. Club members, parents of a club member, and instructors of the club could approach the Executive Manager, the Chair of the Board or a member of the Board with a question that they wished an answer for or about other issues that they needed the Board’s decisions. A motion or an issue could also rise from Field of Operation Teams and as a result, the respective team representative on the Board brought them to the Working Committee or straight to a board meeting. Additionally, the Executive Manager brought motions and issues to the board meetings herself. Issues that the Executive Manager brought to the board meetings were matters that were beyond of her authority and needed the Board’s definition of policy. The Field of Operation Team representatives brought issues and motions to the Working Committee that the team needed the Board’s decision. Many Interviewees mentioned that the Executive Manager was approached the most, when it comes to motions and issues that members, athletes’ parents etc. want the Board’s decision. Additionally, e.g.

members of the club approached the Chair of the Board frequently, when they wanted the Board's statement on a certain issue.

The Working Committee, that comprised of the Chair of the Board, Vice Chair, the Executive Manager and the Secretary, prepared the motions brought to them usually a week before a board meeting. The Working Committee was in charge of the preparation of the agenda and sending it to the Board Members approximately a week before a meeting took place. In relation to board performance, research suggests that both effective and ineffective boards distribute e.g. agenda prior to board meetings, which implies that this process is a fundamental part of a VSO board workings (Hoye, 2002).

One Interviewee said that the Working Committee pondered and decided which issues it brought to the board meetings, whereas another said that almost all issues and motions were put on the agenda if it possible within the timeframe. Although JNV is a grass-root sport club, its main preparatory organs are similar to national governing organizations (NSO) where subcommittee, other committees and Executive Managers have a central role in preparing decisions (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). Despite the fact, that the Working Committee prepares and makes suggestions on some decisions, the Interviewees agreed that most decisions are made, by the Board, during board meetings and might not base on the Working Committee's suggestions. The fact that the working committee prepared motions and made suggestions on some decision, might lead to power issues within the Board, which I will discuss later in chapter 5.8.

Although the Working Committee was in charge of the preparation of the agenda for each board meeting, issues and motions, which were not set on the agenda beforehand, might have rose during a board meeting. Motions and issues that individual Board Members rose, on the agenda in the beginning of the meeting, were typically not prepared and were issues that had come up after the Working Committee had prepared the agenda for that particular meeting. Despite many channels that issues and items ended up on the agenda, the Interviewees seemed to have a clear understanding how the system worked. However, it is unclear, whether the Board has established official policies or is the agenda comprising system built on silent knowledge.

5.3.3 Decision-making process

The Board of JNV did not have an official, stated pattern for decision-making, but all Interviewees outlined the same routine how the Board made decisions in board meetings. First, The Chair of the Board raised a matter from the agenda. Second, a person, who had additional information about the matter, usually the Executive Manager or a Field of Operation Team representative, elaborated on the matter if necessary. Third, discussion about the matter followed, and occasionally about other matters as well, and finally, a decision was made or possibly postponed to the next meeting.

In JNV's board, discussion was perceived as an essential part of the decision-making process. The way that the Interviewees described the decision-making process, it seems that the Board used *consistent* decision-making style. Some matters were discussed and decided, while other matters were discussed more thoroughly, but if an agreement was not reached, the matter was left on the table. The Board also left proposals and issues on the table if the members felt that they did not have sufficient information about the matter at hand. The Board tried to avoid making uniformed decisions and tried to make an adequate analysis of the matter at hand. *Consistent* decision-making fits best to fast-pace and changing environment, where decisions need to be made fast, with adequate information. (Lussier & Kimball, 2014.) The way that the Interviewees described the decision-making and the fact that the Board did not have a formal, documented, decision-making pattern, suggests that the decision-making was quite informal in JNV board meetings, as it traditionally is in VSOs (Amis & Slack, 1996). The Interviewees also noted that decisions were usually reached during discussion and voting was rarely used, which further suggests that the decision-making is informal. Considering how the Interviewees described decision-making, how they rarely had to vote or the relaxed atmosphere in decision-making, it seems that the Board operated in positive manner and used open decision-making processes. Furthermore, positivity and open decision-making indicate that the Board consisted of volunteers who had developed stronger sense of commitment towards JNV, an important component of the efficiency and effectiveness with which sport organizations attain their goals (Cuskelly, et al., 1998).

The Interviewees perceived many decisions, made by the Board, common, everyday decision that were mainly reacting to a situation or a dilemma presented to the Board. The club's mission, vision and values were not a topic of a discussion every time the

Board made a decision, but the Interviewees thought they influenced the decision-making. One Interviewee saw mission, vision and values obvious and did not think that any decisions were made e.g. against the values of JNV. Other Interviewee admitted that she did not always remember to consider JNV's vision and described the effect of vision to decision-making as follows

[...] "sitä just itekään ei monesti muista, että tota siellä kun kokouksissa istuu, että sen vision pohjalta tavallaan pitäis niitä päätöksiä tehdä, mutta sit taas ne monet päätökset mitä on, on semmosia arkipäiväisiä ja muuta, että ne ei niin kun oo niin... että vaikuttais tai en koe, että näin, mutta kyllä sitä sitten juuri tämmösissä isommissa niin sitte aina palataan siihen mikä meidän tavote on ja mikä meidän niin kun se perusajatus on, että toteuttaako nää sitä."
(Interview 4) [...] [I don't always remember, when I sit in a board meeting, that the decisions should be made based on our vision, but then again many decisions are everyday by nature and so on, that they're not... that they would affect or I don't feel like it, but then when it is something bigger, then we always go back to what our objective is and what is our principle idea, and does the decision fulfil it.]

All Interviewees shared the same view that the Board could not completely ignore mission, vision and values in decision-making. Many Interviewees mentioned that the effect of a certain decision was considered from different angles and how it would affect the different Fields of Operation within the club. Club's objectives and vision could be seen affecting the decision-making, but not all decisions were made based on them because of the everyday nature of certain decisions made by the Board.

The Interviewees said that, in addition, to vision, objectives and values of the club, time of the year and financial situation were factors that affected decisions. One Interviewee explained that, to maintain continuum, the Board had to remember prior decision and definitions of club's policies, and lean on them when they made new decisions. Another Interviewee raised budget as a factor that affected decisions. By this, she meant that, for the club to stay viable, decision made by the Board had to take the budget in to consideration. (Interviewee 1).

The financial planning and policies did not come up during the interview questions about the main tasks of the Board, but when I asked the Interviewees about the decision-making, many Interviewee mentioned the finances of JNV as the driving force behind decision.

This suggests that the Board considers finances as an important element in board work, but it seems to be difficult to connect to the main tasks because of its everyday nature.

The operational body of JNV was also a factor that dictated decisions. For instance, number of club members, number of attendants in a fitness class and the time of the year were elements that made the Board to react and make decisions based on the current situation. I raised the Board's involvement to the operations of the club earlier in this thesis (see 5.2.1). Although it is important to understand and be aware of the JNV operations, the Board should consider distancing itself from the daily operations, and concentrate more on the broader picture in its decisions. In the current state of JNV, it seems that the decision-making is centralized to the Board. The Executive Manager had some decision-making power, but it seems that the Board made majority of the decision, regardless the level of operation. Centralization of decision-making is related to the size of the organization. The smaller the organization is, the more centralized the decision-making is (Koski & Heikkala, 1998) and in the hand of the few (see Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992). On the other hand, it is difficult to say, what type of decisions the Executive Manager or the Field of Operation Teams made, since the focus of the interviews was the Board's decision-making. However, the Executive Manager's higher involvement in decision-making might increase the efficiency of the entire Board of JNV (see Hoye, 2002).

5.4 Information

The Interviewees saw the Executive Manager as one the most important sources of information during board meetings. A couple of Interviewees said that the Executive Manager, who ran the daily operations of the club, had the most information about the club and about the issues dealt on the Board. The Executive Manager presented most of the motions and issues from the agenda and if needed provided additional information to the Board. Since she had a visible role, the Executive Manager remained pivotal factor, who controlled the information flow to the Board, and could therefore control the strategic functioning of the Board. This set up may become problematic if the Executive Manager has different perceptions of e.g. financial risk than the Board. However, the Interviewees implied no mistrust towards the Executive Manager and towards the information that she provided to them in board meetings. If the state of trust remains between the Board and the Executive Manager, it can increase the Board's strategic capability (Ferkins, et al.,

2009). Or, if the Board and the Executive Manager lack bilateral trust in all aspects of their relationship, the result might be lowered board performance (Hoye, 2002).

Another important source of information were the Field of Operations Teams' board representatives that had information and knowledge about the operation of their respective fields. Team representatives provided the Board Members additional information, during board meetings, if necessary.

Interestingly, two Interviewees mentioned an issue regarding the Field of Operation Teams' representatives and the information that they provided to the Board, and how informed other Board Members were about what happened in the operational side of JNV. The club had many Fields of Operation and their respective board representatives might not have had information or knowledge about other Fields of Operations. According to the Interviewees, that raised the issue of inefficient information, the situation had two outcomes. First, Board Members had to rely on the information that team representatives provided to them and base their personal decisions upon this information. The first of the two Interviewees said that it was difficult to make a decision that affected other Fields of Operation than her own, because she felt that she might not have sufficient information to make a good decision. She had to depend on other members to give her right information. Second, Board Members who had more information about the issue that the Board was deciding about at the time, had more power compared to those who did not have ample amount of knowledge or information about that certain topic. The second of the two Interviewees said that because she did not have information or knowledge about the subject, she could not comment or get involved in the matter and those with further knowledge had more influence on the matter and would eventually decide how they see fit. Both Interviewees, who commented on the deficiency of information, agreed that if they did not know enough about e.g. the field of *coaching and competition*, it was the best to stay quiet.

Issue of imbalanced information, does not only transfer power to those who have more information, but also affects the quality of decisions that the Board makes as an entity. The dilemma lies in the voluntary model that does not necessarily allow boards make fully informed decisions due to the limited access to information from a range of perspectives required (Ferkins, et al., 2009). JNV's Board Members were all volunteers

and lacked resources i.e. time, or even interest, to familiarise themselves with other Fields of Operation, and perspectives, to make fully informed decisions on every motion presented to the Board. Furthermore, if the Board Members do not know what is happening in JNV, i.e. in other Fields of Operation than their own, it might lead to poor governance (Palmer, 2011). In fact, the Board should be aware that not all its members are as educated in all fields and think of ways to involve all Board Members in all decisions. Furthermore, the Board makes decisions on operational matters, hence it might be these types of matters that not all Board Members are knowledgeable, interested or bothered enough to involve themselves in the decision-making.

However, despite the fact, that some Interviewees raised the issue of imbalanced amount of information within the Board, common accord was that if the Board did not have ample information about a matter, the result was that decision-making became difficult and the Board left that motion on the table until there was enough information. However, some Interviewees still perceived that they could not express their opinion because they did not understand how other Field of Operations functioned. Still, the question is whether the issues that the Board handles are overly practice oriented, and for this reason, are not clear for all Board Member. Alternatively, the Board Members of JNV do not have the time or interest to invest in seeking information independently, or ask enough questions in order to understand.

Although some Interviewees considered themselves occasionally uninformed, JNV's Working Committee tried to facilitate Board Members' access to information. Many Interviewees said that the Working Committee provided the Board large amount of information. When the Working Committee prepared an agenda to a board meeting, they gathered supplementary package that provided information to the Board Members about motions and issues that the Working Committee considered, requiring additional information, and occasionally a decision proposal.

The Working Committee's practice to compile an information package to each meeting, if needed, saves Board Members' valuable time, but it also poses a question of biased information and eventually decisions. For instance, one Interviewee said that the supplementary information package was the only source of information, in addition to the information offered by the Executive Manager and Field of Operation Teams'

representatives during board meetings, that she got information from before and during board meetings. In JNV, not only the Executive Manager, but also the Working Committee has a pivotal role in the flow of information to the Board, and hence can control the e.g., strategic functioning of the Board (see Ferkins, et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the Working Committee provided invaluable information to the members of JNV's board that without, some Board Members might have been even less informed.

A couple of the Interviewees thought that working on the field and participating in club's events were places where they can receive information from coaches, instructors, club's members or parents. Arguably, these JNV Board Members might have realized that governance is communication and good internal communication is an essential part of functioning sport club. The relationship should be bilateral, since club members of JNV might become passive if the information from the Board does not reach the club's members and vice versa, and the Board might grow unaware of the interests and expectations of the club's members if their messages do not reach the Board. (Heinilä & Koski, 1991.) Of course, as all Interviewees emphasized, and according to my personal observations, the Field of Operation Teams' representatives brought messages from the field to the Board in each board meeting and every person involved with the club could reach Board Members unofficially. Nevertheless, the Board needs to consider, whether greetings from the teams should be the only official routine of hearing from the field.

In addition to the afore-mentioned sources of information, one Interviewee mentioned, for instance, that the Chair of the Board was a source of information, and couple other Interviewees mentioned, that occasionally the Board brought experts to their meetings. These experts were e.g. representatives of KesLi or coaches and instructors of JNV. Furthermore, Interviewees sought information from the internet, and more precisely from other clubs' websites. Additionally, the Finnish Gymnastics Federation and KesLi, as well as former and current Board Members that had served on the Board longer were sources of information for some Interviewees.

5.5 Responsibilities and tasks of the Board Members

With its nine seats, JNV's board fulfilled legal requirements (see L 503/1989) as well as had common composition of positions to an average sport club (see Mull, Bayless, Ross & Jamieson, 1997), but was slightly larger than, what in some studies has been related to

board performing more efficiently (see Hoye, 2002). The seats on the Board were divided among six Field of Operation Teams' representatives, Chair of the Board, Vice Chair and a Secretary. The team representatives could be team leaders, e.g., in the *competitive and coaching* field, or team members that an operational team had appointed to the Board ("Hallitus," n.d.). The Field of Operation Teams' responsibilities and tasks were listed in the annual action plan, but the representatives, i.e. Board Members', tasks and responsibilities were assigned orally in the first meeting of the newly elected Board. The Vice Chair and the Secretary had additional duties, stated on the club's website, as liaisons between the Board and the guild, and the gymnastics teams' managers, respectively ("Hallitus," n.d.). Additionally, the Working Committee's tasks were documented in the annual action plan (see Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat, 2014). The only individual member of JNV's board, who had legal task (see Rosengren & Törrönen, 2008) and responsibility description, is the Chair of the Board.

Likely, for the reason, that Board Members represented their respective Field of Operation Teams on the Board of JNV (Hallitus, n.d.) and other Board Members had formal positions, namely the Chairperson and the Secretary, all Interviewees stated that each Board Member had assigned tasks and area of responsibility on the Board. JNV's board had given tasks and responsibilities accordingly to individuals, but also to specific groups, i.e. Field of Operation Teams. Furthermore, it seems that the Board, JNV's governing body, has tried to utilize its restricted operational capacity, by distinguishing tasks and dividing responsibility, and enforce the accountability of individual Board Members. (Heinilä & Koski, 1991.) However, to be more precise, as the individual Board Member's tasks and responsibilities were assigned orally, it is the individuals' obligation to know and remember what their responsibilities and tasks comprise. Arguably, it is because the lack of documentation, that the Interviewees also mentioned ambiguity in Board Members' tasks and responsibilities.

In JNV, tasks and responsibility areas were assigned and tailored based on the interests, knowledge and prior experiences of the Board Members. Alike in the recruiting process, the Board possibly wanted to motivate and increase the productivity of its volunteer members by assigning tasks that the Board Members were familiar with and were interested in. One Interviewee described the distribution of tasks and areas of responsibility as follows,

“Ne [vastualueet] jakautuu aikalailla [hallituksen jäsenten] kiinnostuksen mukaan [...] ne [vastualueet] on kyllä aika hyvin jakautunu oikeestaan sen mukaan, että mitkä on ne ns. osaamisalueet ja samalla kiinnostuksen kohteet.” (Interview 1) [They [areas of responsibility] are divided pretty much according to the interests [of Board Members] [...] they [areas of responsibility] divide pretty well according to what is the area of knowledge and at the same time the areas of interest [of a Board Member].]

The quote above and other Interviewees’ answers, assimilate a situation found in a VSO study, where portfolios, i.e. tasks and responsibilities, were allocated not based on the skills and expertise of Board Members, but rather based on the personal interests that the Board Members expressed (Hoye, 2002). However, new Board Members in JNV were scouted from the ranks of the club and therefore, the Board Members have some experience from the Field of Operation, that they represent on the Board. Moreover, majority of the Board Members had prior experience of being on an association’s board.

Even though, the Interviewees agreed that each member of the Board had an assigned area of responsibility, the level of how clear those areas were to the Board Members varied among the Interviewees. All Interviewees agreed that everyone on the Board knows who represented which Field of Operation Team, since the positions had been assigned in the beginning of the current term (2015), but still, the clarity of what those responsibility areas consisted of, were, for some Board Members, vague.

For instance, few Interviewees mentioned that in the Field of Operation, from where there was only one representative on the Board, the division of tasks and responsibilities was clear. Whereas, when there were more representatives of one Field of Operation Team on the Board, the clarity of who manages which area, became ambiguous. One Interviewee said, that in these types of situations, where there was more than one team representative on the Board, it was difficult to know to whom to turn to or if the assigned tasks were done on time or at all (Interview 6).

One Field of Operation Team, *Adults*, had two representatives on the Board. It is difficult to say whether the unclear situation was caused by lack of communication between the two representatives, or, alternatively, between the Field of Operation Teams’ representatives and the rest of the Board. Altogether, only few Interviewees brought up

the afore-mentioned issue, but if the situation was caused by miscommunication between the two representatives and the Board, the Board needs to define the responsibilities of the two representatives of *Adults* field of operations more clearly. Otherwise, the ambiguous situation might affect the governance of JNV negatively (see Palmer, 2011).

Another example of vague task and responsibility description is, when new members enter the Board. One Interviewee had the opinion that unclear roles and responsibilities, and division of work task were hindering the work of the Board and continued that definition of tasks and responsibilities was the most important for those new on the Board. The fact that the Board of JNV fails to induct new Board Members is not exceptional situation, considering, that providing effective induction and orientation programs seems to be a secondary issue in VSOs, irrespective of the level of their board performance. VSOs lack either will or the ability to make these types of programs a priority in their organizations. This might be explained with lack of resources, typical state in VSOs, or a general dearth of understanding of induction and orientation practices. Lack of induction and orientation practices is found to be allied with the requirements for adequate role description, education and training for individual board members for their roles on a board. The capability of an individual board member to work efficiently within the board structure is partially dependent on the ability of the member to comprehend, how the structure works, the context of her role, and the role of the board in the governance of an organization. Absence of documented board member roles and accompanying failing induction, orientation, education, and training programmes for the members of the board, seems to have an impact on the capability of VSO boards to perform efficiently. (Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004.)

In JNV, the situation, as described above, seems to be similar compared to other VSOs. Some Interviewees said that the tasks and responsibilities of a single Board Member could be clearer. One Informant mentioned that the Board used to log what each Board Member's job comprised. This practice had since been given less attention to and the Interviewee said that it was difficult to list all tasks of one position on the Board, because the areas of responsibility were divided based on each member's personal interests and knowledge, and the Board was hesitant to restrict each position to a certain mould. Another Interviewee stated that the tasks and responsibilities of the Board Members might be have been clear on paper but probably not in practice. She continued, by saying, that

the Board had gone through the responsibilities and tasks of each member together in the first board meeting in the beginning of the current term (2015). She concluded, that newly elected Board and changes in the tasks and responsibilities were still (December 2015) visible in the board operations and possibly affected the clarity of the tasks, the Interviewee concludes (Interview 5).

It is understandable that the documentation of Board Member roles might be challenging for the Board, considering that each seat on the Board is built based on the interests and expertise of the Board Members. Although, the absence of documented Board Member roles might have a negative influence on a VSO's board efficient performance (Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004), JNV might have, arguably, done what is best in their situation as a Finnish VSO. Considering past difficulties of recruiting volunteers, the Board has tackled the situation by tailoring each role on the Board according to the Board Members interests and knowledge. Nevertheless, the fact that the Interviewees feel that the tasks and responsibilities of Board Members should be clearer, cannot be ignored.

5.6 Board Members' commitment

[...]tässä hommassa [pitää] olla mä luulen että pitää olla semmonen sopivasti hullu että siinä jaksaa, että [hallituksen] kokoukset on suoraan töitten jälkeen [...]. (Interview 6) [[...] in this type of trade, I think that, [you need] to be right kind of crazy to keep up, because [board] meetings are straight after work [...]]

Because commitment of volunteers is crucial for the effectiveness of an organization and to the delivery of community-based sports (Cuskelly, et al., 1998), the Board of JNV is lucky, since all Interviewees said that they were committed to the Board and had several reasons why. Furthermore, it seems that JNV's Board has been able to avert the development, in Finnish sport club culture, where people are willing to volunteer, but they lack the ability to sustain commitment (Koski, 2012). Although all Interviewees said that they were committed, it is difficult to evaluate the level of their actual commitment, because during the interviews the Interviewees only communicated their own perceived commitment. However, a good estimation would be that each Board Member commits at least 30 hours a year, if the mean duration of one board meeting is 150 minutes. In

addition to that 30 hours, comes naturally Field of Operation Team meetings and club events that the Members of the Board participate and volunteer.

It seems that in JNV, alike in VSOs generally, attitudes and commitment to board work are strong, but vary spontaneously (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). For instance, one Interviewee made a good observation by saying that because all Board Members were volunteers, it could not be expected that all Board Members were similarly committed. Arguably, individual Board Members might perceive some issues, that the Board deals with, more important than other matters, and for this reason, the Board Members might display more commitment and industriousness towards the issues that are most related to their interests and knowledge, i.e. the issues of their respective Field of Operation. As a result, it seems that some members are more committed to the Board than others.

On the other hand, as found in research, some Board Members might find it difficult to attend board meetings but they still effectively fulfil their roles outside the boardroom, whereas other Board Members might attend 100 per cent of the board meetings but contribute minimal effort and undertake no meaningful work in between meetings. (Hoye, 2007.) One Interviewee expressed the level of activeness, that is expected from the Members of the Board, by saying that a Board Member needed to be active and have a drive for accomplishing tasks, because being on the Board was not the whole picture, but along came different types of events and projects as well (Interview 3).

The display of commitment, or activity of the Board Members, showed during the board meeting that I observed. For example, some Board Members were on their mobile phones, others chatted about irrelevant issues while other Board Members discussed the matters of the organization. Hence, the level of attendance in board meeting cannot be the only indicator of the level of Board Member commitment.

Later in this section, I will present the results and discuss how the Board Members indicate their commitment and motivation to board work. For the reasons discussed above it is problematic to evaluate how committed the Board Members of JNV actually are, but arguably, they might be committed enough, considering how successful the club is.

5.6.1 Personal reasons

During the interviews, the Interviewees stated various reasons for their commitment. Interestingly, the most common reason for the Interviewees to participate in e.g., board meetings was the atmosphere. Half of the Interviewees mentioned that the swell atmosphere in board meetings motivated them the most to take part in board operations. One Board Member described the atmosphere's effect on her personal motivation to participate in board meetings after a long day at work as follows

Ei kai siellä [hallituksen kokouksissa] käviskään jos se olis ankeeta [...] niin sitähan niin kun kyllä jonkun kerran miettii et oisko se helpompi kuitenkin mennä kotiin [töiden jälkeen] mutta joka kerta aina aattelee että JES! kun sinne on niin kiva mennä, niin jaksaa niin kun sillä, kun on niin hyvä ilmapiiri (Interview 1) [If it were dreary there [in board meetings] I wouldn't propably go [...] you sometimes ponder if it would be easier to just go home [after work] but then every time you think "YES!" it is so nice to go there, and it carries you along way because the atmosphere is so good.]

Whether the Board of JNV is intentionally striving for positive atmosphere, during board meetings, or whether it comes organically, JNV benefits from positive atmosphere in stronger volunteer commitment. In other words, sport organization, in this case JNV, that operates in positive manner and resolve rather than suppress conflicts are more likely to have volunteers that have developed stronger sense of commitment towards their organization (Cuskelly, et al., 1998). Atmosphere is only one of the factors, that the Interviewees mentioned, that kept them committed to the JNV board. Two Interviewees had personal values that sustained their commitment and effort to work for the benefit of the club. Some Interviewees said that a possibility to make a difference and see how the club operates were the reasons why they were on the Board. One Interviewee mentioned that she had a personal interest towards sport club activities and considered being on the Board of JNV as something that might benefit her in the future. Majority of the Interviewees said that they tried to attend all board meetings because they had committed to sitting on the Board in the beginning of the term. All committing factors that the Interviewees mentioned have been found, in research, to be significant predictors of organizational commitment (see Cuskelly, et al., 1998).

A few Interviewees said that having a long history and love towards the club and gymnastics motivated and committed them to keep working on the Board of JNV. Many

of the Interviewees used the term “*JNVläinen*”, which can be translated as *JNVee*, meaning a person who is or has been a member of JNV, when they talked about other members of the Board or used the name to refer to themselves. In addition, all current members of the Board (2015) had a long history with JNV, whether as members, parents or employees, due to the fact, that new members were mainly recruited from within the club. One reason for recruiting internally, as mentioned earlier in this thesis (see 5.1.1), was the Board’s loose prerequisite for new members to know how Field of Operation, which they would represent on the Board, functions. In the context of Board Member commitment, another reason might be that internally recruited members have previous connection to the club and might therefore have sense of commitment to organizational, JNV, goals and values. Having members with sense of organizational commitment on the Board, does not only predict JNV administrators’ (Board Member) commitment and turn over, but also ensures the capability to deliver their services successfully (Cuskelly and Boag, 2001). Because JNV is a successful Finnish grass-root sport organization, I suggest, that JNV’s success is partially due with committed Board Members.

According to the Interviewees, their commitment to board work showed most clearly in meeting attendance. Majority of the Interviewees said that they tried to attend all board meetings, because they had committed to sitting on the Board in the beginning of the term. In addition to attending board meetings, the Interviewees said that by conducting the tasks that had been entrusted upon them and taking part in the club’s activities as volunteers, they signalled their commitment. Research suggest that board members that have higher sense of affective commitment, i.e. are committed because they want to be, aspire to meet their obligations and work more prolifically at their own role as a voluntary board member of the board (Hoye, 2007). Affective commitment might further explain why the Interviewees really attended meetings and took on extra tasks as volunteers in club’s activities. It seems that, JNV Board Members were committed, because they want to be. In fact, the Interviewees probably wanted to volunteer willingly, because the Board Members in JNV did not receive financial compensation for their services. However, as mentioned earlier in this section, meeting attendance is not the only indicator of commitment (see Hoye, 2007). In fact, as I observed during the meeting, not all Board Members were present. Not only were there members missing for the entire meeting, but also parts of the meeting as well. Hence, it seems that the effort and time that the Board

Members of JNV contribute outside the Board meetings combined with in-meeting activity, might be a good indicator of Board Member commitment.

Although, the Interviewees said that took take part in the club's activities and conducted tasks that were assigned to them, only one Interviewee regarded taking interest in the club's and other Field of Operations' matters as being committed to the Board. Perceiving the Board as a separate entity of the club or the highest deciding unit seems to be difficult for some of the Board Members of JNV, and it appeared in the commitment answers of the Interviewees. The Board Members should be as committed to all Field of Operations' matters as they are on their respective ones, but it seems that, again, the Interviewees were mostly interested in, and the most committed to their respective Fields of Operation. Furthermore, the Board Members seemed to have a restricted capability to perceive the club as the body that concentrates on high-level issues, policy and strategic direction of JNV (e.g. Inglis, 1997; Koski & Heikkala, 1998; Shilbury, 2001; Palmer, 2011).

5.6.2 External reasons

Some Interviewees mentioned, that one way of committing and motivating Board Members to board work was a club membership that the Members of the Board received. The Interviewees mentioned also that having Christmas parties, and going to "a someplace nice" after each season, to plan the next season, were motivational practices. Additionally, having board meetings on different weekdays motivated and made it easier to commit, and lowered the threshold to attend board meetings.

Alike in other board practices, atmosphere played a role in committing and motivating Board Members. Majority of the Interviewees mentioned good spirit in board meetings and open, encouraging and accepting atmosphere as a motivational factor. Despite the fact, that it seems that the Board had good motivation and commitment practices in place, a couple of Interviewees stated the contrary and said that there were only few, if any practices implemented to motivate and commit Board Members and more could have been done. Furthermore, one Interviewee mentioned that the Board expressed gratitude to other volunteers, but failed to thank its own members. Opinions of what the Interviewees regarded as motivational actions, varied. For instance, many Interviewees said that coffee and sandwiches were served before each meeting, but not everyone perceived that as a motivational or committing practice. Lastly, one Interviewee said that

having responsibility, a role on the Board that was based on one's personal interests, and working on something that made a difference were motivational factors that committed the Board Members the most to board work.

Interestingly, the Interviewees had polarized views, about how or whether the Board commits and motivates its members. Some Interviewees mentioned practices for motivating and committing Board Members to board work, while other Interviewees disregarded them. The opposite views of the Interviewees might have a connection to the notion that many Interviewees raised, when asked about motivational tools and practices to commit, that everybody was committed and motivated to work on the Board. It could be interpreted as to no motivation and commitment practices are needed because all Board Members are motivated and committed enough. Still, although only a minority, some Interviewees expressed a need for more motivation and committing practices. On the other hand, it might also be that the practices are imbedded in the Board's regular practices that not all Board Members can therefore identify or consider as motivational practices. For example, the Christmas party or coffee and sandwiches, in board meetings, are considered, by some, as something that motivates, but by others not.

Additionally, sources of motivation and commitment seem to be more abstract than concrete. For example, atmosphere or encouragement from the Chair of the Board, or even the possibility to make a difference and having responsibility, are motivating for some. A few Interviewees also mentioned that the Board rewarded, hence motivated, the volunteers working in the club operations, but did not pay enough attention to itself, namely to the Board Members. In other words, the Board Members did not pay attention to themselves as much as they rewarded volunteers that dedicate their time in club operations.

The Members of JNV's Board seemingly had sense of affective commitment of some level, or else they probably would not attend the board meetings or work on their assigned tasks. However, arguably, the sense commitment that the individual Board Members had towards JNV, stemmed from themselves and not from current board practices, excluding atmosphere, albeit it is not a practice. The Board would benefit from adoption of processes that foster higher levels of organizational engagement among Board Members; hence, they would develop greater sense of emotional attachment to their peers and to the

club. Consequently, JNV board could enable its individual Board Members to develop higher sense of affective commitment towards the club, to its purpose, and as result towards the roles that the individual members play in contributing to organizational outcomes. (Hoye, 2007.) Nonetheless, the question is, whether the Board as an entity is able to make a conscious decision to create practices that aim to increase motivation and commitment its own members or should e.g. the Working Committee be the body that tends to those practices. Or, whether there is a need for new motivational and committing practices. It seems that the Board Members in JNV had a great sense of internal motivation and all Interviewees seemed to sit on the Board for personal reason, but still considered what is best for the club. Therefore, the Board should simply be aware of what role does its members' motivation and commitment mean for its performance. Furthermore, another aspect of adopting more practices is, who would be in charge of creating and implementing them. With restrictions in amount of resources, creating additional practices, might take away time from other tasks of the Board. Moreover, if the Board decides to adopt new motivational practices, it should clearly state which Board Members would oversee the implementation of these practices.

5.7 Atmosphere and interpersonal relationships

As it has transpired throughout this thesis, all Interviewees perceived the atmosphere during board meetings positive. Many Interviewees said that they had good time, they joked, and that there was great deal of laughter in board meetings. Even though the Board had serious matters that it needed to deal with in board meetings, keeping it light and cheerful helped the Board Members to push through difficult issues and long meetings. The Interviewees also described the atmosphere as open, accepting and equal. Moreover, the atmosphere during meetings was informal and board meetings contained discourse that was off-topic. Despite, that all Interviewees said that the atmosphere was quite mellow, one Interviewee mentioned that the atmosphere could also be hectic at times due to the busy schedules of the Board Members. One Interviewee sums the answers of all Interviewees' in a quote below

Mun mielestä ilmapiiri on semmonen lämmin ja keskusteleva...semmonen tasapuolinen, tasa-arvonen. Niinku kaikkia mukaan lähteneitä arvostetaan ihan niinkun omana itsenään ihan samalla tavalla jokaista jäsentä. (Interview 7) [I think that the atmosphere is warm and

chatty...like, unbiased and equal. Everyone that has jumped on board are valued for who they are, every member the same way.]

Based on the answers, the all Interviewees seemed to understand the importance of good atmosphere during board meetings and in JNV, alike in other successful organizations, the amount of positive discourse overcame the negative. Usually in successful organizations, discourse is focused on the external challenges rather than internal conflicts and the nature of the dialogue is based on questions rather than contention. (Rahnasto, 2011.) During the board meeting, that I observed, I did not witness any negative discourse, but rather an open, positive and warm atmosphere, alike the Interviewees described during the interviews. However, the discourse, in board meetings, was mainly focused on internal issues, rather than external challenges. Still, majority of the internal issues dealt by the Board were not conflicts, but issues related to the operation of the club. Altogether, it seems that the Board Members respected each other and they understood the voluntary nature of the Board work, which showed on the Board and in the atmosphere during board meetings.

Interviewees described their communication and interpersonal relationships good. There had not been discord between the Board Members and everybody was friendly with one another. Interpersonal relationships varied among the Board because some Board Members had known each other longer than others had and were more involved with each other outside the Boardroom than others were. Additionally, age discrepancy among the Board Members caused some variance in interpersonal relationships. According to the Interviewees, the afore-mentioned factors did not affect neither the interpersonal relationships negatively nor the communication during board meetings. One Interviewee stated that they sat around the boardroom table as a family. Another Interviewee said that although everyone was friendly with each other, it took time after a change of Board Members for all to be acquainted with each other and their ways to communicate. All Interviewees agreed that discourse and communication was open, and all matters involving the club or the Board were shared to all Members of the Board and the Chairperson. Whether the Board of JNV consciously maintained the interpersonal relationships or whether they were naturally good within the JNV's board, nurturing positive relationships amongst Board Members and Executives has been found to affect board performance in VSOs (Hoye & Cuskelly 2007). The Board Members appeared to

have good communication and interpersonal relationships during board meetings, and some even outside the boardroom. However, considering some answers, regarding the Board Member tasks and responsibilities questions, some Board Members seemed to have difficulties communicating with each other in- and outside the boardroom. An example of poor communication between Board Members is the situation described in chapter 5.5. As there were two *Adults* Field of Operation Team representatives on the Board, and the role and tasks of the representatives was occasionally unclear to some Board Members, the Board should pay additional attention in communication. In other words, the plans of which *Adult* representative is responsible for which tasks should be communicated clearly to all Board Members. Nevertheless, good interpersonal relationships and overall good communication, between Board Members, might be a factor that makes JNV a successful VSO.

Alike interpersonal relationships among the Board Members, each Interviewee described the relationship and communication between the Chair of the Board and the Board Members as good or excellent. The majority of the Interviewees perceived the Chairperson as an equal, and all were in friendly terms. One Interviewee said that the Chair of the Board acknowledged all Board Members, listened and valued their opinions and work. The same Interviewee stated that the interaction and relationship worked both ways and that the Board appreciated the Chairperson and considered her to be honest. (Interview 4.) Additionally, the Interviewees described the Board – the Chairperson relationship as open. Numerous Interviewees mentioned that the Board Members and the Chair of the Board could raise difficult matters into discussion, state their opinions, and disagree with each other without compromising the relationship.

Although the Interviewees described the relationship between the Board and the Chairperson close and inclusive, research suggests that the nature of the roles inside VSOs boards requires executives and board chairs to develop closer relationship with one another, than with the board members (Hoye, 2003). Furthermore, the relationship between the board chair and the person responsible for managing the organization, in JNV the Executive Manager, is essentially important (Palmer, 2011). All Interviewees agree that the Chair of the Board and the Executive Manager had genuinely good relationship and they communicated well in- and outside the board meetings. Interviewees said that the Chairperson and the Executive Manager had a direct and

trusting relationship and that their communication resembled the Board and the Chair of the Board communication, i.e. both two could express their opinions, raise difficult matters into discussion and have different views without jeopardising their relationship. Not only does it seem that the Executive Manager and the Chairperson have a close relationship, but moreover, the relationship that the Chairperson of JNV's board and the Executive Manager have, represents an ideal partnership (see Palmer, 2011).

JNV is lucky in a sense that the Chair of the Board and the Executive Manager work well together and that they have the type of relationship that the Interviewees describe, because in many VSO's the partnership of the Chairperson and the Executive Manager can be affected by egos, personalities and efficiency of the two individuals involved (Palmer, 2011). The Chairperson — Executive Manager -relationship and the quality of it is arguably a factor that affects the Board's overall performance. In fact, higher-quality exchange relationship especially between Executive Manager and the Chair of the Board is associated with higher levels of board performance (Hoye, 2006). Therefore, I argue that the interpersonal relationship that the chair of the JNV board and the Executive Manager have, could be a factor in the success of JNV as an organization.

5.8 Power and leadership

Kyllä meillä kaikilla on yhtä paljon valtaa [...] (Interview 3) [We all do have the same amount of power [...]]

The quotation above summarizes the consensus of the Interviewees; no individual Board Member had more power compared to others. However, it came through from the interview answers that individual Board Members could influence the decisions that the Board makes directly and indirectly and gain influence, power, through e.g. information. Furthermore, it even seemed that some entities, or positions, within the Board had more power than others do.

5.8.1 Tools to influence

During the interviews, the Interviewees raised different tools to have an influence on the Board. The most common way to have an influence was to be active and express opinions, as well as be present in board meetings. Another, more indirect way to affect the Board's

operation was to be absent. If many Board Members were absent, the meeting was not quorum (see “Säännöt”), which meant that the Board could not make necessary decisions. Absent Board Members affected the Board operations negatively and hindered the work, as many motions and decision needed to be pushed to another meeting.

The Board tried to minimize the influence of absent Board Members by modifying the agenda, in beginning of each meeting, according to which Board Members were present, or who need to be. A couple of the Interviewees said that a Board Member could raise motions and suggestions on the agenda before or in the beginning of a board meeting and influence the proposals handled by the Board. One member mentioned the Board’s Facebook –group and noted that members could share thoughts and start discussions. Altogether, all members agreed that members’ own actions and activity were the most effective ways to influence the board operations and decisions.

5.8.2 Equally unequal

The Interviewees agreed that decisions made by the Board were usually collective and no individual person on the Board could make a decision autonomously. However, majority of Interviewees stated that, depending on the decision, some Board Members had more influence on the final decisions than others had. Which members had more influence, depended on the matter at hand. In most topics, the JNV Board Member who had the most knowledge and information about the issue had more influence on the final decision. An Interviewee described the afore-mentioned decision-making situation as follows

Se päätös riippuu vähän mistä asiasta on kyse. Elikkä eniten vaikuttaa se joka on vastuussa siitä asiasta ja sitten joka tietää eniten siitä asiasta. Että tavallaan niinku onhan asioita, että minäkään en tiää, että tällänen on ollu. Ei oo sillon mitään niinku...jos ei oo yleistä mihin pystyy kommentoimaan, niin eihän siihen voi sanoo. Hehän sen on ratkassu ja pohtinu. Se päätös on asiasta kiinni ja ketkä sen päätöksen taustatekijöitä on ollu ja ketkä on ollu sitä työstämässä. (Interview 3) [The decision depends on the matter. The person who is responsible for that issue and has the most knowledge about the issue has the most influence on the matter. There are things that I don’t even know about that have happened. Then you don’t have like...if it isn’t anything common that you can comment then you can’t say anything. They have come to a solution and thought it through. The decision depends on the matter and on who are behind the issues and have been preparing it.]

Although the Interviewees denied that there were persons on the Board that had more power than others did, the answers indicated that some Board Members' opinions had more weight than others did. The quote above illustrates the situation in board meetings. The Board Members who had been working on the issue and possibly retained information from e.g. club members involved, are the ones who make the decision and hearing other Board Members' opinions seems to be only a formality.

The Interviewees also mentioned that those who had the most information, about the dealt issues, talked the most during the discussion. Despite the fact, that the Interviewees insisted that all Board Members had the same amount of power, it seems that, depending on the issue, some members were more powerful than others were and, furthermore, speculatively, the Board consisted of individuals who had more knowledge than other in all matters, thus were more powerful compared to their peers on the Board. The Board of JNV should be careful about letting its members to use power and influence to push through decisions, because power can affect governance in number of ways. First, people or groups with the greatest power can influence the planning process and thus determine the strategic direction of the organization. Second, those with power can regulate who and what gets resources and hence which activities and programmes can be implemented. Third, individuals with power can determine what type of behaviour is accepted in the organization. (Palmer, 2011.)

Interviewees named some individual Board Members who has a tendency being talkative and speaking more during board meetings. These Board Members asked the first questions or talked about unrelated issues. Based on the Interviewees' answers being more vocal, than others, did not directly indicate that the Board Members, that were more talkative, had more influence and power than the more restrained Board Members did. One Interviewee describes the differences of the Board Members in the quote below.

Jotkut [hallituksen jäsenet] on luonteeltaan vähän hiljaisempia kun toiset mutta esimerkiksi yks tämmönen hallituksen jäsen joka on vähän hiljaisempi niin silloin kun hän suunsa avaa niin hän puhuu täyttää asiaa ja on harkinnu sen asian tosi hyvin. [...] silloin varsinkin kuunnellaan tosi hyvin kun tiedetään ettei tavallaan turhaa avaa suutansa että tuota niin niin kyllä kokisin että kaikkia jäseniä siellä kohdellaan tasapuolisesti ja kunnioitetaan ja kuunnellaan heidän mielipidettä. (Interview 5) [Some [Board Members] are by nature more quiet than others are. For example, one Board Member is more restrained [but] when she opens her mouth she talks

right on point and has considered that issue really well. [...] then, I think everyone listens, when we all know that she does not open her mouth for nonsense. So, in that way I feel that all members are treated equally and respected and listened to]

Not only does the quote above indicate that the all Board Members were equal, but, additionally, it shows that all Board Members were listened to and given the opportunity to share their opinions. However, not all Board Members expressed their opinions about all issues dealt on the Board, even if they were given the platform to do so. Some Interviewees expressed doubts of their own capabilities of understanding some issues that the Board handles. Consequently, these Interviewees did not always speak up when particular matters were discussed and therefore gave the power to others to decide about the club's matters. In a sense, having a perception of being unqualified expressing an opinion leads to uneven distribution of power and ability to influence the Board's final decisions. The way that the Board Members exercise power affects the governance of JNV, because the influence of individuals and groups upon decision-making depends on the relative power, that they are perceived to possess, in the organization (Palmer 2011). Arguably, power in JNV is the amount of information that each individual Board Member has about the topics and issues that are decided on the Board.

In JNV, unequal distribution of power and influence could possibly be avoided, if all members of the Board would be equally informed. Naturally, being informed means that the Board Members would have to be interested, and have knowledge about other Field of Operation beside their own. The situation in JNV is not unheard of. In voluntary organizations, power is channelled more unstructured ways, and is usually related to cooperation between active operators and the networks that they create (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). In JNV, the active operators are the Board Members that are involved and interested in other Field of Operations' issues and thus create networks among each other. The governance structures of a VSO can be used to explain the range of power patterns within its board. Board members and precisely those who are the most closely connected to the club members, that use the services that the organization offers, are the ones who create and maintain VSOs. (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003.)

As I mentioned in chapter 5.4, some Board Members seeked information independently. For instance, some Interviewees said that they connected with the members of the club to

receive information. Arguably, the Board Members who sought information from the source, i.e. club members, were more connected with the members of the club, than those receiving second-hand information from the daily operations of the club only in board meetings. Additionally, some Board Members were more involved in the daily operation of the club as athletes, instructors, and liaisons. Arguably, those JNV Board Members who were more in contact with the club members might had more power in the boardroom. However, despite the clearly uneven distribution of power, the Interviewees seemingly did not see a problem, but rather were aware of the fact, depending on the topic, that some Board Members had more influence on the decisions than others did.

5.8.3 The powerful

Even though the Interviewees collectively expressed that, ultimately, they all had equal amount of power and opportunities on the Board, the Interviewees named three entities within the Board, who had more influence on the decisions that the Board made. First, the Chair of the Board had more power than Board Members did. A couple of Interviewees also mentioned that the Chair of the Board had more influence on the final decisions than Board Members did. However, the Interviewees had mixed views about the Chairperson's elevated power, or lack thereof. One Interviewee was under the impression that the Chair of the Board should not have more power than others, whereas another Interviewee stated that the chair had more power but it was more abstract than concrete. The Chairperson lead the meetings, introduced motions to the Board, made summaries of the discussions, and proposed tabling of motions to the next meetings; hence, the Interviewees said that, together with the Executive Managers, the Chairperson talked the most during board meetings. Despite the mixed interpretations that the Board Members had, concerning the quantity of power that the Chairperson possessed, all Interviewees agreed that the Board's decisions were collective and the Chair of the Board dis not dictate the any decisions. Considering the tasks and role that the Chair of the Board has, I suggest that the chair had more power and influence over the Board than the Board Members had. However, it does not seem that JNV's Board was completely led by the Chairperson, which might be a sign of an ineffective board (see Hoye, 2002).

Second person, that the Interviewees mentioned to have more influence compared to the members of the Board, was the Executive Manager. A few Interviewees stated that the

Executive Manager affected the final decisions. One Interviewee said that the Executive Manager's opinions had an impact on the final decisions because she had more knowledge about the issues dealt in the Board meetings than Board Members did. Interestingly, in middle size, and especially small non-governmental organizations (NGO) the Executive Manager has a substantial role in the operations. The size of an organization relates to the number of tasks that the Executive Manager has and hence power. (Koski & Heikkala, 1998.) Although JNV is not an NGO, it is loosely comparable to a small NGO, because the governance principles apply. As some Interviewees expressed it, the Executive Manager had the most knowledge about the club's operation. She executed multiple tasks as an Executive Manager, and additionally coached one of the competitive gymnastics teams of the club. Despite the fact, that the Executive Manager did not have suffrage on the Board, the Board Members valued her opinions and therefore she might have had hidden influence, power, to the Board's decisions, which might also affect the board performance positively (Hoye, 2002).

Third entity, that the Interviewees mentioned having more influence in e.g. the Board's decisions, was the Working Committee. Couple of Interviewees acknowledged the Working Committee's influence on the decisions that the Board made. Two Interviewees perceived that the Working Committee, the Chairperson, the Vice Chair, the Secretary, and the Executive Manager, guided the Board's decisions the most. In JNV, the Working Committee prepared the agenda and additional information for every board meeting. For instance, if the Working Committee had a decision proposal for a certain motion, it made a remark of it on the agenda and to the information sheets that it sent to the Board Members, before each board meeting. The Working Committee's influences and practices in JNV assimilate those in NGOs, where subcommittees, and other committees, as well as Executive Managers have a central role in preparing decisions (Koski & Heikkala, 1998). However, both Interviewees, that mentioned the influence of the Working Committee, concluded that the Board discussed all matters on the agenda and listened everyone's opinions.

Although the Interviewees recognized the power structures within the Board, they were convinced that all voluntary Board Members had equal capabilities to influence the Board's decisions and the direction of the organization. The Interviewees' perception of equality in decision-making indicates, that the Board Members shared the leadership in

the Board, and between the Board and the Executive Manager. The Board sharing the leadership with the Executive Manager is especially important, considering the Board's effort to create a strategy for JNV. Despite the fact, that the Board of JNV was currently (2015) en route to finalizing a strategy for the club, sharing the leadership within the Board might enhance the Board's strategic capability during the process and in the future. Furthermore, in the future when the strategy is potentially ready, it is beneficial for the Board to share the leadership with the Executive Manager. (see Ferkins, et al., 2009.)

Although, actions and power of the Executive Managers were not particularly under investigation in this thesis, the Interviewees raised some indicators of the Executive Manager's influence on the Board. As mentioned many times in this thesis, the Executive Manager did not have suffrage on the Board, but attended all board meetings, and the Board valued her opinions in decision-making. Furthermore, the Executive Manager was a source of information for the Board Members, and the Board depended on the guidance of the Executive Manager, which was evidently a common aspect of the two parties' relationship, in other VSO's, as well (Hoye, 2002). Even though the Executive Manager ran the daily operations of JNV and had thus power in concrete tasks (see Koski & Heikkala, 1998) of the organization, she shared, undoubtedly, leadership with the Chair of the Board. Additionally, I argue that the entire volunteer Board leadership shared leadership in high degree between, the Executive Manager and the Chairperson, which can possibly lead to enhanced board performance (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003b; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). Furthermore, the fact that the Executive Manager sat in the JNV board meetings and shared information from the field with the Board, is a practice that is an important element in the Executive Manager — Board relationship, and a might have a potential positive impact on board performance (Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003b). Possibly, the situation of shared leadership between the Executive Manager, the Chair of the Board, and the voluntary Board is one component that makes JNV a successful grass-root organization.

5.9 The Board's self-evaluation

There were almost equal amount of opinions about the Board's self-evaluation than there were Interviewees. Some Interviewees said that the Board did not evaluate its performance, whereas others said that the evaluation of board practices and operation leaned on the annual action plan. An explanation for the various opinions about the

Board's self-evaluation might be that the question was seemingly difficult to the Interviewees. Additionally, opinions on how various Interviewees perceived the Board self-evaluation varied greatly among the Interviewees. Supposedly, some of the Interviewees had not considered the importance of Board self-evaluation before they received the questions prior to the interviews. Despite the variety of answers, it seems that the Board had not completely disregarded self-evaluation, which is reassuring, considering the impact of reviewing on the board performance (see Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007) and on governance (see Palmer, 2011).

Some Interviewees considered that the Board relied, in self-evaluation, on the annual action plan, and that once a year conducted self-evaluation was a sufficient practice, whereas some Interviewees thought that the Board should conduct self-evaluations throughout the year. Furthermore, the comprehension of what self-evaluation meant and how it transpired on the Board varied among the Interviewees. For instance, one Interviewee, who stated that there were no self-evaluation practices, said that the Board operations developed constantly and if there were dysfunctional board practices, the Board reacted to them and created new ways to operate. Another Interviewee thought that self-evaluation practices needed to be established and the Board should reflect on its own practices more cohesively. One view, which an Interviewee had about the self-evaluation of the Board, was that the Board fundamentally was the club and therefore, as the Board and the club were a collective their evaluations needed to be done collectively.

Since the Board did not have established board operation self-evaluation practices in place, it was not surprising that the Board also lacked established practices to evaluate the development of board operations. Only one Interviewee mentioned, during her interview, that the Board should create ways to evaluate the development of its own operation, and that the Board will probably have to start conducting board operation and development evaluations in the future (Interview 2).

In case the Board of JNV decides to adopt evaluation practices in the future, it should consider how it administrates them. For example, among other issues, evaluating individuals, i.e. elected volunteer Board Members, performance might pose problems for the Board in the future Board Member recruiting process (see Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004). For instance, some Board Members might find individual evaluation of their volunteer

effort uncomfortable and hence withdraw from the Board prematurely or after their terms end. Arguably, since finding adequate number of volunteers has been difficult for the JNV board in the past and individual evaluation might affect the recruitment process negatively, the Board should be cautious in the way it implements the possible individuals' evaluation practices in the future. Furthermore, it is important that the volunteers are not too closely monitored, but that a board rather develops ways to engage and encourage volunteers to self-monitoring and self-evaluation (Thiel & Mayer, 2009). However, considering that evaluation of Board Members is linked to effectiveness of a VSO board (see Hoye, 2002) the Board of JNV should not be hesitant to implement e.g. individuals' evaluations.

However, alternatively, research also suggests that establishing, namely standardizing, evaluation procedures might lead to conflicts within the organization. Therefore, while establishing evaluation procedures, volunteers and staff need to declare performance expectations for the organization. However, since such declarations can lead to conflicts, both among and within groups of professionals and volunteers, standardization of such procedures is evaded, despite of possible organizational growth and as other areas become increasingly more systematic. (Amis & Slack, 1996.) Considering the way that the Interviewees described the atmosphere and interpersonal relationships, it seems unlikely that the Board will drift into conflict. Still, the possibility of causing damage with established evaluation procedures, is an issue that the Board of JNV should definitely consider, in case they standardize, establish, evaluation practices and procedures. Nevertheless, the gains of evaluation, board's self-evaluation, and evaluation of development and individual Board Members' performance (see Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Palmer, 2011) are, arguably, greater than the possible disadvantages. Furthermore, taking the dynamic and the interpersonal relationships on the Board in to account it seems unlikely that the Board would drift into conflict.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to describe the governance of a successful grass-root sport club, Jyväskylän naisvoimistelijat. Several researchers have studied aspects of national sport organizations' governance, but grass-root sport clubs' governance has not attracted similar attention. Research on Finnish grass-root sport clubs has focused more on organizations' structures and work force (e.g. Koski, 2009; Koski, 2012; Koski, et al., 2015), or on professionalization of Finnish sport clubs (e.g. Koski & Heikkala, 1998). However, governance and impact of governance has been given less attention in Finnish sport management research. Therefore, this thesis generates valuable information, as it sheds light on the grass-root sport club governance, that is ran by group of volunteers, with a help of one paid full time employee.

I investigated the research question, *What traits good governance can be found from a successful, Finnish sport and recreation sport club's board?*, using the research by Ferkins and Shilbury (2012) on VSOs' boards strategic capability, as a framework. Since, I wanted to investigate the subject from one club's point of view I chose qualitative research, and more precisely case study method. I collected the data for this thesis from six Board Members and the Executive Manager of JNV, in December 2015, with semi-structured interviews. In addition to analysing the data from the seven interviews, I examined the club's annual action plan (2015) and club's rules. After reflecting the data with the existing sport management and governance research and literature, I extracted the main characteristics of JNV's governance. After reiterating the main findings, i.e. good governance practices and present aspects that the Board needs to improve, I offer solutions for some of the issues that might affect JNV's board performance and governance in a negative way, explain the limitations of this research, as well as offer future investigation possibilities on grass-root sport club governance.

6.1 JNV – a successful Finnish grass-root sport club?

Looking at JNV from organizational design archetype (see Kikulis et al., 1992) point of view, the club is a mixture of *Kitchen Table* and *Boardroom*. JNV's organizational values are a mixture of *Kitchen Table* and *Boardroom* archetypes. Although the club receives

public funding (*Boardroom*), it also finances its operations with membership fees (*Kitchen Table*). JNV's domain is broad, as it offers sports to the masses as well as elite sports (*Kitchen Table*) and organizes national competitions (*Boardroom*). Criteria of the club's effectiveness is based on membership satisfaction i.e. attendance rates, and the Board holds the club's quality of services in high value (*Kitchen Table*). However, considering JNV's aesthetic gymnastics team's *Sirius*'s performances on international arena ("Sirius, n.d.), JNV's Board might also consider international success (Executive Office) as criteria of effectiveness. (Kikulis et al., 1992.)

Alike JNV's organizational values, organizational structure is combination of *Kitchen Table* and *Boardroom* archetypes. In JNV Board Members' roles are based on interest and loyalty (*Kitchen Table*), but the Members of the Board have some specialized roles and they serve in committees, namely in the Field of Operation Teams or in the Working Committee, which gives them formal roles (*Boardroom*), at least on paper. Finally, the decision-making in JNV is centralized to the volunteer board of representatives (*Boardroom*). (Kikulis et al., 1992.)

From sport management and governance research and literature perspective, it seems that JNV adheres, largely, to good governance practices, which enhance the overall performance of the Board. Notwithstanding the good governance practices, this study also unearthed aspects in JNV's governance that do not comply with good governance practices, which the Board consequently needs to assess.

The Board Member recruitment follows practices that increase the probability of the Board's ability to understand the legal duties and liabilities that are essential for the functioning of the entire organization (Palmer, 2011), and enhance the performance of the Board (see Hoye, 2002; Cuskelly & Boag, 2001). Furthermore, individual Board Members express qualities and abilities that, supposedly, enhance the Board's capability to perform effectively (see Koski & Heikkala 1998; Papadimitriou, 1999) and have strategic capability (Ferskins & Shilbury, 2012). Moreover, afore-mentioned qualities are also looked for when the Board recruits new members.

The current [2015] frame of reference that the Board seems to rely on is the annual action plan that the Board has agreed upon (see Palmer, 2011). Although the Board only plans

JNV's operations only one year at a time, it still has a frame of reference, of a sort, that it needs to have, in order to be strategically capable (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). The Board is taking a step further in planning the operations by being in the midst of strategy formulation process. The Board has included many external entities to the strategy formulation process by engaging operational side actors and listening to the members of the club. However, arguably, the Board has failed to completely engage its own Board Members to the strategy formulation process, which is problematic, considering the Board's strategic capability (see Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012) and the ability to perform strategic functions (Ferkins et al. 2009). Interestingly, before I handed out this thesis for evaluation, the Board had not produced a strategy, or at least it had not been made public on the club's website. Reasons for the lack of finished strategy can only be speculated. It could be that the Board simply has had no time resources to dedicate to finalize the strategy, despite external help, namely KesLi.

The Board's main tasks seem to be to "*Lead the association's operations*" as well as monitor JNV's budget. Especially the latter affects the Board's decisions the most, but it is unclear whether the club has created a concrete financial policy, that is one of the most important roles of a VSO's board (Shilbury 2001). Operational issues are often present in board meetings, and the Board inserts itself deeply in the operational decision-making, when it should concentrate more on higher policy issues (see Inglis, 1997; Koski & Heikkala 1998; Shilbury 2001; Palmer 2011). Additionally, it seems that the Board partially fails to monitor the actions of the Executive Manager, which might leave JNV financially vulnerable.

Although the Board's processes and practices are not standardized, the Board adheres generally to a pattern, regarding the meeting agenda and decision-making in meetings. Therefore, arguably, the Board's practices are sound, which is one of the Ferkins' and Shilbury's (2012) strategic capability signposts. Despite the fact, that the Board follows a similar pattern in decision-making, and in meeting agenda, a rather loose leeway allows issues and matters to arise abruptly in meetings. The liberty of raising issues in beginning of the meetings affects the Board in at least in three ways. First, it shifts the power relations within the Board to those who have more information about the matter, that is raised to discussion unexpectedly, which might lead to biased decision-making (see Palmer, 2011). Information's relation to power personifies in the Executive Manager and

in the Chair of the Board, who both sit on the Working Committee that is one of the most important sources of information to the Board Members. Furthermore, especially the Executive Manager provides vast amount of information to the Board, and hence has influence on the decisions; a situation that which might increase the Board's performance (Hoye, 2002) together with the obviously shared leadership within the Board (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2003b; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). Second, loose instructions in agenda formulation restricts the time resources, as inadequate information on the matters forces the Board to spend time, that is highly limited resource in voluntary boards (Ferkins et al., 2009), to unscheduled discussions or even postpone handling of a matter to the next board meeting. Third, although more related to internal communication, but also to information flow within the Board, is the unclearness of Board Members' areas of responsibility and tasks, which might affect the Board's work negatively (Palmer, 2011). Moreover, and if the Board continues to leave the Board Members' roles undocumented, that might influence the Board's ability to perform efficiently (Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2004). Lastly, although the Board has not completely ignored evaluation of its own operation and operation development, the Board should consider taking evaluation practices into their regular routines, considering the evaluations benefits (see Cuskelly et al., 1998; Hoye, 2002; Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Palmer, 2011).

Atmosphere plays a significant part in JNV's governance. First, atmosphere is the most facilitative factor in JNV's board work. The Board has been able to evade the bickering and tension in the boardroom that might interfere good governance (Palmer, 2011). Furthermore, the Board has been able to bond and create a trusting atmosphere in the boardroom that might lead to elevated board performance (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012). Second, atmosphere is an important, if not the most significant element, that motivates the busy volunteer Board Members to attend meetings, hence it elevates the Board Members' sense of commitment to JNV (Cuskelly et al., 1998), which might affect the Board's ability to deliver JNV's services successfully (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001). It is possible that the atmosphere in board meetings stems from good interpersonal relationships within the entire Board, which might have a positive impact on the Board's performance (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). The Board also benefits from the relationship that it has with the Executive Manager, but more so from the relationship between the Chairperson and the Executive Manager (Hoye, 2003; Hoye 2006; Palmer 2011).

Over all it seems that recruitment practices, frame of reference, although not as extensive as one would hope and good and equal atmosphere makes the Board of JNV to perform on a good level. Consequently, the factors, mentioned above, might as well be the reason why JNV is as successful and persevered throughout the years. However, some aspects of the Board practices and policies are not in-line with current sport management and governance research and literature. Therefore, the following chapter offers solutions for, not only for the Board of JNV, but also for other grass-root sport clubs.

6.2 Room for improvement – solutions for better governance

The Board places value on Board Member education and recruits new Board Members mainly internally. Although education is a relevant way to obtain expertise, having practical experience from the operational side is as relevant because it increases the knowledge about the operational side and might result to better governance. However, recruiting active club members, etc. to the Board, does not guarantee the capability to operate successfully on the Board. Therefore, it would be advisable to learn about the skills and expertise of the potential Board Members before their official election. Moreover, it might be advisable to ensure that the new Board Members have a holistic view about the JNV's operational fields.

According to JNV's club rules, half of the Board Members should resign every other year, which makes the continuity of the Board's work difficult. The rule did not arise during the interviews, nor did the Interviewees indicate in any way that they had resigned previous years for a term. When approaching the issue from governance point of view, it might be more sensible not to have members resigning every other year, to ensure the continuity of governance. Not only would the removal of the statute increase the level of continuity of the Board work but also it would make the Board's time management more effective, and could ease the problem of finding ample number of volunteers to serve on the Board, as I discussed earlier in chapter 5.1.1. Nevertheless, for the sake of keeping up with the demand of the members and the changing environment, changing board composition might be advisable, but the Board should consider extending the number of term that one Board Member can serve on the Board of JNV. Having Board Members serving more than the currently ruled time-period, not only would it possibly affect the continuity of the board work, but also additionally ease the burden of frequently finding suitable Board Members.

It is difficult to know how the number of possible Board Member candidates will develop in the years to come. Finnish people are volunteering more actively, but are less committed (Mäenpää & Korkatti, 2012; Koski, 2012), or are more interested volunteering in the operational sections of sport clubs (Koski, 2012). Furthermore, the least popular voluntary activity is officiating or being a board member of a club (Koski et al., 2015). For the reason mentioned above, in the future, the situation in JNV of abundance of potential Board Members might revert to having scarce amount of prospective voluntary Board Members; which is probable, considering the development in volunteer commitment in Finnish sport clubs (Koski, 2009). The practice that the Board has used in the past, tailoring seats according to prospective Board Members' interests, has possibly helped them to recruit decent number of new Board Members and might also help them in the future. The practice might have been compulsory in the past due to lack of new Board Members, but might be useful in the future as well.

Arguably, catering the interests of prospective Board Members might be more appealing than trying to find a person to fit in a predetermined role. The practice might also affect the level of commitment to the organization and to board work, as Board Members are able to use their expertise and work, voluntarily, in a position that interests them. However, to facilitate the recruiting process and ensure the commitment of potential new Board Members, the Board of JNV needs to have clear definitions of expectations, time consumption and strategic functions, placed on the prospective Board Members (Ferkins, et al., 2009). In other words, during the recruiting process the Board of JNV needs to make sure that the Board Member candidates understand that, although the position fits to their interests, they need to perform time-consuming tasks and complex strategic functions as well. Additionally, The Board should consider orientation measures for new Board Members to ensure that they are well prepared for their term on the Board, and possibly, increase flow of information between current and new Board Members.

A solution for orientation could be a document, compiled in the beginning of every board term, a written document of every task and responsibility of each individual Board Member. The document would not only serve the sitting Board Members, but new members entering the Board as well, by giving both a touchstone, of what is expected of them. In addition, the document could possibly facilitate future recruiting of new Board Members (see Ferkins, et al., 2009). The action plan, that consist tasks and responsibilities

for the Field of Operation Teams, is available for everyone interested. Alternatively, the document that would contain detailed descriptions of Board Members' tasks and areas of responsibilities could possibly be available for Board Members only. Furthermore, having a document that would hold all tasks and responsibilities, would arguably save time and resources, and clarify, not only to individual Board Members, but also to other Board Members, what the tasks and duties of each Board Member are. However, who would compile such document and would it eventually take time from other board tasks, is an aspect to consider as well, but the document would undoubtedly have positive effect on the Board's performance. Notwithstanding, a document would also increase flow of information between the Board Members hence remove uncertainty of who is responsible of which tasks.

The Board is highly absorbed in the operational decision-making. Separating the Board from clearly managerial tasks might enhance the governance of JNV. Additionally, to enhance the governance of JNV, clear organizational structure might be needed, with separation between the Board (strategic direction) and the Executive (management) and a documented delineation of the roles of each. (Palmer, 2011.) In other words, the Board of JNV should concentrate less on e.g. what is the right policy in dividing athletes to gymnastics teams and more on issues related to the overall direction of the club, as mentioned in the club's rules. Additionally, the Board should give the Field of Operation Teams and the Executive Manager more decision-making power. De-centralization could release valuable time to governance of JNV. On the other hand, it is difficult to say, what type of decisions the Executive Manager or the Field of Operation Teams make, since the focus of the interviews was the Board's decision-making. Notwithstanding, the Executive Manager's higher involvement in decision-making might increase the efficiency of the entire Board of JNV (see Hoye, 2002).

Although giving the Executive Manager more decision-making responsibility, the Board needs to be aware its own responsibilities as the highest decision-making body and executive entity. It might be difficult for the voluntary Board Members of JNV to consider the Executive Manager as a paid employee, which can disrupt the Board's role as the employer and observer of the Executive Manager and her actions. Therefore, I suggest that the Board should add monitoring and naming the actions of the Executive Manager to the lists of the official tasks of the Board. Moreover, the Board needs to monitor the

actions of the Executive Manager and be aware what happens within the club, but also create and maintain a trusting relationship with the Executive Manager. Additionally, regarding the Field of Operation Teams, if the Board decides to give the Teams more responsibility, it also needs to clear guidelines for the Teams, e.g., how often they should meet and discuss motions etc. Clear and documented guidelines could standardize the working habits of the Field of Operation Teams' and as a result facilitate the work of the Board.

Given the recent development or lack thereof (see chapter 6.1) in strategy formulation and the resources dedicated to it, the Board should consider whether it should pursue the with the strategy formulation. Nevertheless, if the Board decides to formulate the organizational strategy, the whole board of JNV needs to become more involved in strategy development, thus advance the Board's ability to perform strategic functions (Ferkins, et. al., 2009).

Taking the benefits that evaluation practices can have, on a board of representatives, into consideration (see Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007; Palmer, 2011), I argue that the Board should not only strongly consider developing self-evaluation practices for board processes, but to also evaluation of development practices as well. Furthermore, the Board of JNV should welcome an examination of group processes. Even though it is probable that the current Members of the JNV board have a strong sense of commitment to the club, establishing examination methods to evaluate group processes might facilitate future Board Members to develop a strong commitment towards the organization as well. (Cuskelly, et al., 1998.) Instead, the Board should design and conduct the evaluations in a way that they serve the purpose of the entire organization and the members of the Board. Moreover, the evaluations should give the JNV board and individual Board Members tools to use their valuable time more efficiently, that, arguably, would benefit the entire organization.

6.3 Limitations of this study

During the whole process of completing this thesis, I faced obstacles that affected this dissertation one way or another. The whole research project took over three years from the discovery of the initial research idea, to the completion of this dissertation. First obstacle was the change of the organization right before I intended to start the interviews.

Fortunately, I was able to find, with sizeable assistance from my thesis supervisor's, a new organization within a week after the fallout with the initial sport club. Second obstacle was the discovery of the lack of organizational strategy in JNV, which later affected the formulation of questions in the following interviews. JNV's missing organizational strategy also shifted the research question from strategic capability to a broader view of a grass-root organization's governance. Third hurdle in this research project was its prolonged finalization. I completed the literature review during spring and summer 2015, respectively, and the interviews in December 2015 and the final written report finished in August 2017. It would have definitely elevated the scientific quality of this thesis, if I had finished this written report latest in late spring 2016. Fortunately, with the help of well-organized data collection and documentation of the data, and my research diary, I was able to return to the interviews after one-and-a-half years and report the results successfully.

Additionally, dearth of research and literature on grass-root sport clubs' governance set its own limitations to this investigation. Most VSO governance literature and especially research over the years has concentrated to national sport organizations and less on local sport clubs that this thesis concentrates on, or more precisely in one of them. However, I believe that I was able to apply the existing research and literature to explain what takes place in JNV's boardroom, explain it with, and reflect it to the existing body of knowledge. However, the fact, that the object of this investigation was only one grass-root sport club cannot be ignored, which limits, not only the implementation of the recommendations, that I made for JNV, in other grass-root sport clubs, but the entire contribution of this research to the existing body of knowledge on the matter. Since this was a single case study, the recommendation how to improve the governance of JNV only applies to JNV. Nevertheless, because of this research, other grass-root sport clubs can learn how JNV, a successful Finnish grass-root sport club, is governed and reflect it to their own operations, board practices, and processes.

My experience as a researcher was also definitely a limiting factor. I was unfamiliar with interviews as a data collection method and had no previous experience of qualitative research. Although, the quality of conducting the interviews increased progressively, I still struggled with the wording and no single interview question was phrased the same in the interviews, apart from the background questions. Finding the right wording was

difficult, and definitely had an effect how the Interviewees answered the questions. However, I tried not to give them answers and steer them in any direction with the questions. Another limitation in the interviews was that some of the Interviewees had only sat on the Board less than one full year, and as result, they were not aware of the entirety of the Board's operations and activities. Nonetheless, majority of the Interviewees had more than enough experience to share and for me to get a holistic view of JNV's governance.

6.4 Future research

Research of grass-root sport club's governance, especially peer-reviewed, is thin, and therefore, need of further investigation is justified. This was a qualitative study, but to investigate the masses, quantitative research is needed first, to paint a broader picture of different aspects of governance in Finnish grass-root sport clubs. I would have probably also benefited from quantitative data in this research, even if it had been gathered from JNV's board, but even more, if there had been extensive quantitative data base. Therefore, I suggest that in the future grass-sport clubs' governance is investigated using quantitative data collection methods to investigate the broader state of the clubs' boards.

This research could also be continued, by conducting a follow-up study on JNV after they have finalized their organizational strategy and how it affects the Board operations. Furthermore, all aspects of governance presented in this thesis could be investigated individually and more precise in JNV as well as in other organizations of similar or smaller number of memberships, to build a holistic picture of how grass-root sport clubs in Finland are governed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

JNV club rules (Retrieved from <http://www.jnv.fi/seura/saannot/>)

(For more information, please contact the author)

1§· Yhdistyksen nimi

Yhdistyksen nimi on Jyväskylän Naisvoimistelijat ry, josta käytetään epävirallisena lyhenteenä nimeä JNV.

2§· Yhdistyksen kotipaikka

Yhdistyksen kotipaikka on Jyväskylän kaupunki.

3§· Yhdistyksen tarkoitus

Yhdistyksen tarkoituksena on ylläpitää ja kehittää voimisteluliikunnan harrastajien fyysistä kuntoa ja liikunnallisia taitoja, lisätä henkistä ja sosiaalista hyvinvointia, tukea kasvua ihmisenä sekä tarjota miellyttäviä elämyksiä ja kokemuksia.

4§· Tarkoituksen toteuttaminen

Yhdistys toteuttaa tarkoitustaan

1. järjestämällä voimistelu-, urheilu- ja muita liikuntaharjoituksia
2. järjestämällä koulutustilaisuuksia
3. hankkimalla tarvittavia välineitä
4. järjestämällä näytöksiä, leirejä, juhlia, kilpailuja ja muuta vastaavaa toimintaa
5. vaikuttamalla kotipaikkakunnallaan liikunta-, terveyskasvatus liikuntapaikkasuunnitteluun ehdotuksin ja kannanotoin.

5§· Yhdistyksen jäsenyys liitossa

Yhdistys kuuluu jäsenenä Suomen Voimisteluliittoon (Svoli) ry:een, jota näissä säännöissä sanotaan liitoksi.

6§· Yhdistyksen jäsenyys

Yhdistyksen toimivaksi jäseneksi voi liittyä ilmoittautumalla ja maksamalla jäsenmaksun sellainen yksityinen henkilö, joka on kiinnostunut yhdistyksen toiminnasta.

Kaikki jäsenryhmät kunniapuheenjohtajia lukuun ottamatta maksavat liittymismaksun ja vuotuisen jäsenmaksun, joiden suuruudet määrätään erikseen kunkin jäsenryhmän osalta yhdistyksen syyskokouksessa. Jäseneksi hyväksymisestä päättää hallitus. Toimivilla 15 vuotta täyttäneillä jäsenillä on äänioikeus.

Yhdistyksellä voi olla toimivien jäsenten lisäksi kannattajajäseniä, kunniajäseniä sekä kunniapuheenjohtaja. Kannattajajäseneksi hallitus voi hyväksyä yksityisen henkilön tai oikeuskelpoisen yhteisön, joka tukee seuran toimintaa suorittamalla vuotuisen tai kertaluontoisen kannattajajäsenmaksun. Yhdistyksen kokous voi hallituksen esityksestä kutsua kunniajäseneksi henkilön, joka on merkittävästi edistänyt yhdistyksen toimintaa. Kunniajäsenen arvo on elinikäinen.

Kannattajajäsenillä ja kunniajäsenillä on läsnäolo- ja puheoikeus yhdistyksen kokouksissa, mutta ei äänioikeutta.

Yhdistys voi kutsua vuosikokouksessa tekemällään päätöksellä kunniapuheenjohtajaksi yhdistyksen puheenjohtajana ansiokkaasti toimineen henkilön. Kunniapuheenjohtajan arvo on elinikäinen. Kunniapuheenjohtajalla ei ole jäsenmaksuvelvollisuutta eikä äänioikeutta. Yhdistyksellä voi olla yksi kunniapuheenjohtaja kerrallaan.

Hallituksen jäsenten, vakituisten ohjaajien, valmentajien ja joukkueenjohtajien tulee olla yhdistyksen jäseniä. Heidät on vapautettu jäsenmaksusta.

Aikaisempien sääntöjen nojalla saavutetut jäsenoikeudet säilyvät.

7§· Yhdistyksestä eroaminen

Jäsenellä on oikeus erota yhdistyksestä ilmoittamalla siitä kirjallisesti yhdistyksen hallitukselle tai sen puheenjohtajalle tai ilmoittamalla siitä yhdistyksen kokouksessa pöytäkirjaan merkittäväksi.

8§· Yhdistyksestä erottaminen

Hallitus voi erottaa jäsenen, joka ei täytä hänelle kuuluvia velvollisuuksia tai toimii yhdistyksen tai liiton sääntöjen tai tarkoituserien vastaisesti. Erotetulla on oikeus vedota yhdistyksen seuraavaan kokoukseen lähettämällä valituskirjelmä yhdistyksen hallitukselle 30 päivän kuluessa erottamispäätöksen tiedoksisaannista.

9§· Yhdistyksen kokoukset

Yhdistyksellä on kaksi varsinaista kokousta: kevätkokous huhtikuussa ja syyskokous marraskuussa. Hallitus kutsuu koolle ilmoittamalla siitä vähintään 8 päivää aikaisemmin yhdistyksen kotipaikkakunnalla ilmestyvässä sanomalehdessä tai kirjallisena ilmoituksena jäsenille. Kokouksutsussa on huomioitava yhdistyslain 24 pykälän määräykset. Yhdistyksen ylimääräisiä kokouksia pidetään, kun hallitus katsoo sen tarpeelliseksi tai kun vähintään 1/10 yhdistyksen jäsenistä sitä kirjallisesti erityisesti ilmoitettua asiaa varten hallitukselta vaatii. Tiedotustapa ja -aika ovat samat kuin yhdistyksen varsinaisissa kokouksissa.

10§· Asioiden käsittely yhdistyksen kokouksissa

Syyskokouksessa käsitellään seuraavat asiat:

1. todetaan kokouksen laillisuus ja päätösvaltaisuus
2. valitaan kokoukselle puheenjohtaja, sihteeri, kaksi pöytäkirjan tarkastajaa sekä kaksi ääntenlaskijaa
3. esitetään yhdistyksen vuosikertomus
4. esitellään edellisen vuoden tilit ja tilintarkastajan / toiminnantarkastajan niistä antama lausunto sekä vahvistetaan tilinpäätös
5. päätetään vastuuvapauden myöntämisestä asianomaisille
6. käsitellään muut hallituksen esittämät asiat
7. käsitellään asiat, jotka yhdistyksen jäsen on jättänyt viimeistään 30 päivää ennen kokousta hallitukselle kevätkokouksessa käsiteltäväksi, mikäli asiaa ei ole kokouksutsussa mainittu.

8. Kevätkokouksessa käsitellään seuraavat asiat:

9. todetaan kokouksen laillisuus ja päätösvaltaisuus
10. valitaan kokoukselle puheenjohtaja, sihteeri, kaksi pöytäkirjan tarkastajaa sekä kaksi ääntenlaskijaa
11. valitaan hallituksen puheenjohtaja
12. valitaan hallituksen jäsenet erovuoroisten tilalle
13. valitaan yksi tilintarkastaja / toiminnantarkastaja ja yksi varatilintarkastaja / varatoiminnantarkastaja
14. päätetään liittymis- ja jäsenmaksujen suuruudet erikseen kullekin jäsenryhmälle
15. käsitellään ja hyväksytään tulevan kalenterivuoden toimintasuunnitelma talousarvioineen
16. valitaan yhdistyksen edustajat liiton vuosikokouksiin.

Yhdistyksen kokouksissa asiat ratkaistaan yksinkertaisella äänen enemmistöllä lukuun ottamatta sääntöjen muuttamista, yhdistyksen purkamista tai yhdistyksen omaisuuden luovuttamista koskevia asioita, jolloin yhdistyksen päätökseksi tulee se mielipide, jota on kannattanut vähintään kolme neljäosaa äänestyksessä annetuista äänistä.

Äänen mennessä tasan vaali ratkaistaan arvalla. Muissa asioissa se mielipide voittaa, johon kokouksen puheenjohtaja on yhtynyt.

Äänioikeus on jokaisella 15 vuotta täyttäneellä toimivalla jäsenellä. Muilla jäsenillä on läsnäolo- ja puheoikeus yhdistyksen kokouksissa.

11§· Yhdistyksen toiminnan johtaminen

Yhdistyksen toimintaa johtaa sen lainmukaisena hallituksena kevätkokouksen valitsema hallitus. Hallituksen muodostavat yhdeksi vuodeksi kerrallaan valittu puheenjohtaja ja kahdeksi toimintavuodeksi kerrallaan valitut kahdeksan (8) jäsentä. Hallitus valitsee keskuudestaan vuosittain varapuheenjohtajan ja sihteerin sekä nimeää muut tarvittavat vastuuhenkilöt. Hallituksen jäsenistä puolet on erovuorossa vuosittain aluksi arvan, sittemmin vuoron mukaan.

12§· Hallituksen tehtävät

Hallitus kokoontuu puheenjohtajan kutsusta tarvittaessa tai jos vähintään kaksi hallituksen jäsentä vaatii kokoontumista. Jos puheenjohtaja on estynyt, kutsuu varapuheenjohtaja hallituksen koolle.

Hallitus on päätösvaltainen, kun koolla on vähintään viisi (5) jäsentä, joista yksi on puheenjohtaja tai varapuheenjohtaja.

Hallituksen tehtävänä on

- edustaa yhdistystä
- johtaa yhdistyksen toimintaa
- hoitaa yhdistyksen omaisuutta ja taloutta
- päättää toiminnanjohtajan tai muiden työntekijöiden palkkaamisesta yhdistykseen
- kutsua koolle yhdistyksen kokoukset, valmistella asiat niihin sekä täytäntöön panna kokousten päätökset
- pitää jäsenluetteloa
- hankkia ja kouluttaa ohjaajia
- tehdä kalenterivuosittain yhdistyksen tilinpäätös
- laatia ja lähettää liittoon sen vaatima vuositilasto
- päättää seuran ansiomerkkien myöntämisestä sekä tehdä esitykset muista kunnia- ja

- ansiomerkeistä
- suorittaa muut yhdistyslain tai sääntöjen vaatimat määräaikaisten toimenpiteet.

13§· Yhdistyksen nimen merkitseminen

Yhdistyksen nimen ovat oikeutettuja merkitsemään puheenjohtaja tai varapuheenjohtaja yhdessä sihteerin kanssa. Yhdistyksen toiminnanjohtaja on oikeutettu merkitsemään yhdistyksen nimen yhdessä puheenjohtajan, varapuheenjohtajan ja sihteerin kanssa.

14§· Yhdistyksen tilintarkastus / toiminnantarkastus

Yhdistyksen tilikausi on 1.8.-31.7. Hallituksen on jätettävä tilit tilintarkastajalle / toiminnantarkastajalle viimeistään kuukautta ennen yhdistyksen syysvuosikokousta. Tilintarkastajan / toiminnantarkastajan tulee palauttaa tilit tilintarkastus- / toiminnantarkastuslausuntoineen hallitukselle viimeistään 2 viikkoa ennen yhdistyksen syysvuosikokousta.

15§· Toiminnan tukeminen

Toimintansa tukemiseksi yhdistys voi

1. harjoittaa julkaisutoimintaa
2. järjestää leirejä, kursseja, kilpailuja ym. voimisteluun ja liikuntaan liittyviä tapahtumia
3. välittää jäsenilleen liikuntaan liittyviä välineitä, asuja ja tarvikkeita
4. ottaa vastaan lahjoituksia ja testamentteja
5. omistaa ja hankkii omaa toimintaansa varten kiinteää ja irtainta omaisuutta.

Kiinteistön luovuttamisesta tai kiinnittämisestä taikka yhdistyksen toiminnan kannalta huomattavan muun omaisuuden luovuttamisesta päättää yhdistyksen kokous. Kokous on kutsuttava koolle siten kuin säännöissä on määrätty. Asia on mainittava kokouskutsussa. Yhdistyksen päätökseksi tulee mielipide, jota on kannattanut vähintään 3/4 äänestyksessä annetuista äänistä.

16§· Sääntöjen muuttaminen

Näiden sääntöjen muuttamisesta päättää varsinainen kokous. Päätöksen on tullakseen hyväksytyksi, saatava 3/4 äänitenemmistön kannatus annetuista äänistä kahdessa vähintään kuukauden väliajalla pidettävässä kokouksessa, joista toinen on varsinainen kokous. Muutos on ilmoitettava yhdistysrekisteriin merkittäväksi.

Sääntöjen muuttamisesta on ilmoitettava kokouskutsussa.

17§· Yhdistyksen purkaminen

Yhdistyksen purkamista koskeva päätös on tehtävä yhdistyksen kahdessa, vähintään kuukauden väliajalla pidetyssä kokouksessa, joista toinen on yhdistyksen varsinainen kokous. Päätöksen on tullakseen hyväksytyksi saatava molemmissa kokouksissa 3/4 äänitenemmistön kannatus äänestyksessä annetuista äänistä.

Yhdistyksen purkamisesta on ilmoitettava kokouskutsussa.

Jos yhdistys purkautuu, luovutetaan jäljelle jäävät varat liitolle käytettäväksi tämän yhdistyksen tarkoituksien toteuttamiseen Jyväskylässä.

18§· Yleisiä määräyksiä

Paitsi sitä, mitä nämä säännöt sisältävät, noudatetaan voimassaolevia yhdistyslain määräyksiä.

Appendix 2

Janita Suomalainen

Haastattelurunko
[Interview guide]

Jyväskylän yliopisto
Master's Degree Programme
in Sport Management and Health Promotion

Hallituksen jäsenet
[Board Members]

Marraskuu 2015
[November 2015]

JNV:n HALLITUKSEN HALLINNON OSA-ALUEET

[Aspects of JNV's governance]

HAASTATELTAVAN TAUSTA

[Background information of the Interviewee]

1.

Nimi:

[Name]

Koulutus/Ammattinimike:

JNV:n seuratoiminnassa mukana vuodesta:

[Education/Profession]

[Part of JNV's activities since year]

Kokemus seuratyöstä muualla?

[Experience of club work outside JNV]

JNV:n hallituksessa vuodesta:

[JNV's Board Member since year]

Millainen kokemus sinulla on johtokunnan/hallituksen työskentelystä muualta?

[What is your experience of working in a Board outside of JNV]

JÄSENET

[Board Members]

→Miten uudet jäsenet valitaan hallitukseen?

[How are new Board elected on the Board]

→Millaisia taitoja ja osaamista uusilta jäseniltä odotetaan?

[What type of skills and expertise is expected from new Board Members?]

→Miksi sinut on mielestäsi valittu hallitukseen?

[Why do you think that you have been selected on the Board?]

→Millaisia johtoryhmän työskentelyssä vaadittavia taitoja ja osaamista mielestäsi omaat?

[What skills and expertise do you think you have that are required in board work?]

JOHTOKUNNAN TOIMINNAN PERUSTA

[Frame of reference of the Board]

2.

→Mitkä ovat mielestäsi seuran tavoitteet ja tehtävät?

[What are the objectives and tasks of JNV?]

→Mitkä ovat mielestäsi hallituksen tärkeimmät tehtävät?

[What are the most important tasks of the Board?]

→Miten tavoitteet ja tehtävät näkyvät hallituksen päätöksissä?

[How to the objectives and tasks display in decisions?]

Avustavia kysymyksiä edellisiin:

[Assisting questions]

→Miten kuvailisit seuran arvoja?

[How would you describe the club's values?]

→Mikä on seuran missio ja visio?

[What are the club's mission and vision?]

→Miten seuran tehtävien ja tavoitteiden onnistumista/saavuttamista mitataan?

[How is the actualization of the club's tasks and objectives measured?]

3.

→Miten kuvailisit strategian muodostamisprosessia?

[How would you describe the strategy formulation process?]

→Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat mielestäsi seuran strategian muodostamiseen?

[In your opinion, which matters affect the strategy formulation?]

→Kuka tai ketkä vaikuttavat mielestäsi seuran strategian muodostamisprosessissa ja miten?

[In your opinion, who affect the strategy formulation process, and how?]

HALLITUKSEN TOIMINTA

4.

→Miten esitykset päätyvät esityslistalle?

[How do motions end up on the agenda?]

→Kuka valmistelee/miten asiat valmistellaan päätöksentekoa varten?

[Who prepares/how the matters are prepares for decision-making?]

→Miten ja mihin hallituksen kokouksissa käytetään aikaa?

[How and to what is time used in board meetings?]

→Mitkä ovat aikaa vievimmit tehtävät?

[What are the most time consuming tasks?]

→Miten kuvailisit päätöksentekoa hallituksessa?

[How would you describe decision-making on the Board?]

→Miten päätökset tehdään?

[How are decisions made?]

→Miten seuran missio, visio ja arvot vaikuttavat hallituksen tekemiin päätöksiin?

[How do the mission, vision and values affect the decisions?]

→Miten johtokunta saa päätöksentekoon tarvittavaa tietoa?

[From where does the board receive information for decision-making?]

→Miten sinä hankit/saat tietoa, joka auttaa päätöksenteossa?

[How do you search for/receive information that facilitates decision-making?]

→Mitkä tekijät edistävät hallituksen työskentelyä?

[Which factors facilitate the Board's work?]

→Mitkä tekijät vaikeuttavat hallituksen työskentelyä?

[Which factors hinder the Board's work?]

5. TYÖNJAKO

[Distribution of work]

→Miten työtehtävät ja vastuualueet jakautuvat hallituksen jäsenten kesken?

[How do tasks and responsibilities divide among the Board Members?]

→Miten kuvailisit työtehtävien ja vastuualueiden selkeyttä hallituksen jäsenten kesken?

[How would you describe the clarity of tasks and responsibilities among the Board Members?]

→Miten tämä näkyy toiminnassa konkreettisesti?

[How does this display in concrete board work?]

→Kuvaile omaa rooliasi johtokunnassa.

[Describe your own role on the Board.]

6. SITOUTTAMINEN

[Board Member committing]

→Miten johtokunnan jäseniä sitoutetaan ja kannustetaan hallituksen toimintaan?

[How are the Board Members committed and motivated to board work?]

→Voitko mainita konkreettisia keinoja?

[Concrete actions?]

→Kuvaile omaa sitoutumistasi hallituksen toimintaan.

[Describe your own commitment to board operations.]

→Miksi olet hallituksessa? Motiivit?

[Why are on the board? Motives?]

→Miten nämä syyt ja motiivit näkyvät käytännön toiminnassasi?

[How do these reasons actualize in your board work?]

7. VUOROVAIKUTUS

[Communication]

→Kuvaile yleistä ilmapiiriä hallituksen kokouksissa.

[Describe the atmosphere in board meetings.]

→Miten kuvailisit hallituksen jäsenten välisiä suhteita ja vuorovaikutusta?

[How would you describe the interpersonal relationships and communication between Board Members?]

→Miten kuvailisit hallituksen puheenjohtajan ja hallituksen jäsenten välistä suhdetta ja vuorovaikutusta?

[How would you describe the interpersonal relationship and communication between the Board and the Chairperson?]

→Miten kuvailisit hallituksen puheenjohtajan ja toiminnanjohtajan välistä suhdetta ja vuorovaikutusta?

[How would you describe the interpersonal relationship and communication between the Chairperson and the Executive Manager?]

8. PÄÄTÖKSENTEKO JA VALTA

[Decision-making and power]

→Ketkä mielestäsi vaikuttavat lopulliseen päätökseen?

[Who affect to the final decisions?]

→Miten koet vallan ja johtajuuden jakautuvan hallituksen sisällä?

[How do you perceive the division power and leadership within the Board?]

→Onko kaikilla yhtä paljon vaikutusvaltaa päätösten teossa?

[Do all have equal amount of power in decision-making?]

→Miten hallituksen jäsenet voivat vaikuttaa hallituksen toimintaan?

[How can Board Members affect the board operations?]

→Miten sinä koet voivasi vaikuttaa hallituksen toimintaan?

[How can you affect the board operations?]

→Ketkä puhuvat kokousten aikana eniten?

[Who speak the most during board meetings?]

→Saavatko kaikki mielipiteensä esille?

[Can everyone express their opinions and be heard?]

9. ARVIOINTI

[Evaluation]

→Miten hallitus arvioi omaa työskentelyään?

[How does the Board evaluate its own work?]

→Miten hallitus arvioi oman toimintansa kehitystä?

[How does the Board evaluate the development of its operation?]

→Miten hallitus arvioi seuran tavoitteita ja toimintaa?

[How does the Board evaluate the club's objectives and operations?]

→Miten hallitus arvioi seuran toiminnan kehitystä?

[How does the Board evaluate the development of the club?]

+ KONREETTISET KEINOT?

[+ Concrete actions]

→Millä tavoin hallituksen oman työskentelyn ja toiminnan kehityksen arvioinnin tulokset vaikuttavat hallituksen päätöksiin?

[How do the evaluation results of board work and development of board operations affect the decisions?]

→Millä tavoin seuran tavoitteiden, toiminnan, ja toiminnan kehityksen arvioinnin tulokset vaikuttavat hallituksessa tehtäviin päätöksiin?

[How do the evaluation results of the club's objectives, operation, and operation development affect decisions?]

→Haluatko lisätä jotain jo esitettyihin kysymyksiin?

[Would you like to add something to the questions that we have covered?]

→Haluatko vielä kertoa jotain johtokunnan toimintaan liittyen, joka ei tullut vielä puheeksi haastattelun aikana?

[Would you like to add something related to the Board's operation that we have not yet covered?]

Appendix 3

Information to the participants (For more information, please contact the author)

Tutkija:	Tutkielman ohjaaja:
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Tutkimuslaitos: Jyväskylän yliopisto, Liikuntakasvatuksen
laitos

INFORMAATIO TUTKIMUKSEEN OSALLISTUVILLE

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia urheilullisesti menestyneen urheiluseuran hallintoa ja erityisesti sen johtoryhmän työskentelyä. Tällä tutkimuksella kerätään haastatteluaineisto liikuntakasvatuksen laitoksen kansainvälisen maisteriohjelman (Master's Programme in Sport Management and Health Promotion) pro gradu - tutkielmaan. Haastattelut on suunniteltu tehtäviksi urheiluseuranne johtokunnan jäsenille heille sopivana ajankohtana. Haastattelut nauhoitetaan ja litteroidaan. Haastateltavat saavat päättää itse siitä, käytetäänkö tutkielmassa heidän nimiään tai muita tietoja, joista heidät tai seura on tunnistettavissa. Tutkimus voidaan raportoida teidän halutessa niin, ettei kenenkään nimi, paikkakunta, laji tai seuran nimi tule esille. Tällöin seuraanne ei voida tunnistaa. Tutkimuksen aineisto tulee olemaan ainoastaan tutkijan käytössä ja mahdollinen paperiaineisto tuhotaan asianmukaisesti.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tuottaa tietoa yleisesti urheiluseurojen toiminnan ja hallinnon kehittämiseen. Tuotettu tieto on luonnollisesti myös tutkimukseen osallistuvan seuran käytössä. Tutkielma tallennetaan sähköisenä versiona Jyväskylän yliopiston tietokantaan, jossa se on vapaasti luettavissa.

Haastateltavat saavat päättää henkilökohtaisesti omasta osallistumisestaan tutkimukseen. Toisin sanoen he voivat kieltäytyä osallistumasta tutkimukseen ja he voivat missä vaiheessa tahansa perua osallistumisensa tutkimukseen ilman, että keskeyttämisestä aiheutuu heille seuraamuksia. Heillä on myös oikeus kysyä missä tahansa vaiheessa lisätietoja tutkimuksesta. Tutkimukseen osallistuvat hyötyvät tutkimuksesta saaden tietoa oman seuran johtoryhmän työskentelystä, jonka pohjalta sitä voidaan kehittää.

Toivomme vastausta tutkimukseen osallistumisesta viimeistään pe 6.11.2015 klo 10 mennessä.