

Institutionalizing Gender-Equal Sports in Kenyan Universities: Why Korfball Must be Included in University Sports Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Despite the presence of gender-mainstreaming policies in Kenya, university sports programmes remain largely gender-segregated, with male-dominated sports receiving more funding, visibility, and institutional support than female sports. Korfball, a mixed-gender sport designed to promote equality and inclusion, has been introduced in Kenyan universities but remains minimally institutionalized. This study investigated the potential of institutionalizing Korfball as a gender-equal sport within Kenyan university sports programmes. The specific objectives were to examine its contribution to gender equality and inclusive participation, evaluate perceived physical, mental, and social health benefits, and develop a framework for its institutionalization. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The target population comprised 200 stakeholders from universities affiliated with the Kenya Universities Sports Association (KUSF), including student-athletes, sports administrators, physical education directors, and sports officers. A sample of 57 respondents was selected. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended items. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics in R software, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Findings showed that 52.5% of respondents perceived unequal resource allocation in traditional sports, while only 20.3% indicated that Korfball was actively promoted in their institutions. Strong agreement was recorded for Korfball's role in breaking gender silos (62.7%), but lower levels of agreement were observed for neutralizing athletic biases, leadership equity, and addressing female marginalization. Health-related perceptions were generally weak and inconclusive, with no significant differences in perceived benefits (Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.487$, $p = 0.632$), leading to acceptance of the second null hypothesis. Institutional analysis further revealed inadequate structures supporting adoption, leading to acceptance of the third hypothesis. The study concludes that while Korfball promotes gender integration, its broader impact is constrained by weak institutional support. It recommends policy reform, increased awareness, structured implementation, and partnerships to support its institutionalization in Kenyan universities.

Keywords: Gender equality, institutionalization, inclusive participation, Kenya, mixed-gender sports

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, higher education systems have increasingly recognized sports as a powerful platform for social transformation, resource equity, and the promotion of gender equality (Soysa and Zipp, 2019). In countries like the United States and Canada, modern updates to collegiate sports governance have focused on bridging systemic gaps in athletic resource distribution between male and female student-athletes (Cass, 2024). Research shows that structured gender-equal athletic opportunities in higher education significantly enhance female leadership, boost self-esteem, and dismantle deep-seated athletic stereotypes. These global developments demonstrate that intentional policy frameworks and innovative sporting formats are essential to fostering inclusive academic environments (Watson, 2024).

In Europe, the evolution of university sports has increasingly integrated mixed-gender disciplines to break down traditional sex-segregated barriers and promote social integration. Korfball, which originated in the Netherlands as the world's only dedicated mixed-gender team ball sport, has become a core fixture in continental university sports programmes (Gubby, 2019). Studies indicate that sports requiring absolute cooperation between equal numbers of men and women actively reduce gender bias and promote mutual respect on and off the field. These findings highlight that mixed-gender sports serve as a vital tool for structural social engineering within higher education institutions (Işıkgöz *et al.*, 2025 and Ogilve *et al.*, 2019).

In many Asian countries, universities are adopting diverse and skill-oriented sports frameworks to build social cohesion and address student wellness. Countries like Taiwan and South Korea have integrated mixed-gender sports like Korfball into their university curricula and competitive structures to maximize participation and optimize space (Kim, 2020). Research reveals that mixed-gender sporting environments foster strong team synergy and emotional intelligence, as success depends on collective strategy rather than raw physical dominance. These international trends illustrate that integrating inclusive sports disciplines plays a major role in enriching the contemporary university experience (Santosh, 2021).

Across Africa, university sports departments have traditionally been governed by highly gender-segregated frameworks that mirror broader continental social disparities. In West African nations like Nigeria and Ghana, competitive university sports often prioritize male-dominated disciplines, leaving female tournaments underfunded and poorly publicized (Aboagye, *et al.*, 2026). This systemic imbalance limits female student-athletes from accessing elite training facilities and sports scholarships. In this landscape, the introduction and development of Korfball; a uniquely mixed-gender sport requiring equal numbers of male and female players on the pitch; presents a structural alternative to the traditional, single-sex sports that slow down gender-mainstreaming efforts within higher education athletic departments (Longman, 2023). The growth of Korfball in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Ghana, directly challenges the hegemonic athletic models of the region. By enforcing complete gender parity in its team composition and rules, Korfball provides a level playing field where female student-athletes are granted equal financial support and visibility (Gennaro and Aderinto, 2019).. In West African higher education institutions, where women have historically faced underfunding in sports, Korfball serves as a tool for empowerment, allowing male and female students to compete alongside one another as absolute peers (Howe, 2024).

In East Africa, higher education regulatory bodies have started aligning university sports with regional and global gender-equity treaties (Hailu *et al.*, 2023). As Korfball gains traction across East Africa, it provides a practical solution to the regional challenge of policy translation. The sport circumvents the traditional barriers of patriarchal sports infrastructure by establishing a cooperative framework where male and female players must interact without physical or structural dominance (Simiyu, 2026).

In Kenya, university sports programmes are managed under the Kenya University Sports Federation (KUSF), which has historically featured heavily segregated athletic paths (Kwevu, 2021). Studies in Kenyan higher education reveal that female students face immense sociocultural hurdles, institutional neglect, and limited resource distribution within university sports. These disparities result in a significant loss of female sporting talent and perpetuate a skewed, unequal athletic culture (Ndiragu *et al.*, 2022; Muthoka, 2021; OsSai and Nwabuwe, 2025).

The integration of Korfball within KUSF activities provides the exact structural alternative required to re-socialize Kenyan male and female students to interact as absolute peers on the field. To address these gaps, KUSF recently took a progressive step by introducing mixed-gender sports like Korfball into its national championship calendar. Korfball's unique rules; featuring four men and four women per team, with strict regulations permitting players to mark only opponents of the same sex; completely eliminate physical mismatch dominance.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the formulation of national gender-mainstreaming policies and statutory requirements designed to achieve gender equity in higher education, Kenyan university sports programme remain deeply gender-segregated and inequitable. While KUSF has recently recognized Korfball as an official, budget-friendly

discipline to break down these barriers, the sport is currently relegated to a peripheral exhibition status. There is a complete lack of a structured, policy-backed administrative framework to fully integrate and institutionalize Korfball into core university budgets and daily recreation. If this structural gap is not investigated and addressed, Kenyan universities will continue to maintain a highly unequal athletic environment that contradicts sustainable development goals and marginalizes female sporting talent.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Korfball does not significantly contribute to promoting gender equality and inclusive participation in university sports programmes.

H₀₂: There are no significant physical, mental, or social health benefits associated with participation in Korfball among university students.

H₀₃: Structural institutional factors do not significantly influence the framework for institutionalizing Korfball within Kenyan university sports programmes.

THEORY

Theoretical Framework

To comprehensively investigate the institutionalization of Korfball as a gender-equal sport within Kenyan university sports programmes, this study relies on a dual-theoretical approach. It pairs a macro-sociological framework to evaluate institutional and structural gender dynamics with a meso-level management framework to assess policy integration and programmatic sustainability.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

The primary theoretical anchor for this inquiry is Feminist Standpoint Theory, developed by Hartsock (1983) and expanded by Harding (1986). This framework posits that knowledge is socially situated, and that perspectives from marginalized or subordinated groups offer a more objective, comprehensive understanding of systemic power relations than those of dominant groups. In the context of university athletics, sports governance has historically been built around male experiences and concepts of physical dominance. This structure often leaves female student-athletes navigating an ecosystem where sports funding, media attention, and training facility allocations are heavily skewed in favour of men (Hartsock, 2019).

Applying Feminist Standpoint Theory allows the researcher to analyze the structural setup of university sports by examining the active experiences of female participants, coaches, and sports administrators. This theory directly guides the objective which examines how Korfball; through its unique co-educational rules; challenges traditional power hierarchies on campus. By requiring exactly four men and four women to play on equal terms and banning physical mismatch marking, Korfball creates a distinct sporting landscape. This study uses the theory to evaluate how this mixed-gender sport can disrupt patriarchal assumptions in athleticism, shift campus cultures, and elevate female leadership and visibility within higher education sports systems.

Institutional Logics Perspective

To complement the structural focus of Feminist Standpoint Theory, this study uses the Institutional Logics Perspective as a supporting framework, pioneered by Thornton and Ocasio (1999). This perspective defines institutional logics as the organizing principles, values, and practices that guide behavior and decision-making within specific bureaucratic fields. University sports departments operate under a deeply entrenched legacy logic centered on commercial success, historical performance, and single-sex sports categories. When introducing a new sport like Korfball, administrators often face resistance due to bureaucratic habits, established funding lines, and fixed facility allocation systems (Ghafran and Yasmin, 2019).

This minor theory provides the analytical tools needed to address the objective which focuses on developing an institutionalization framework. It helps the researcher evaluate how a new logic of gender equality and co-

educational participation can be integrated into the existing administrative systems of Kenyan universities. By understanding the conflicts between old athletic traditions and modern gender equity goals, this study can identify the policy adjustments, partnership guidelines (with bodies like KUSF), and resource management strategies required to secure long-term support for Korfball. This ensures the sport moves from a temporary exhibition game to a permanently funded varsity program.

Empirical Literature Review

Korfball's Contribution to Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusive Participation

The architectural design of traditional team sports fundamentally reinforces binary segregation, which routinely disadvantages female athletes in higher education. Historically, legacy sports like soccer, rugby, and basketball prioritize male athletic prowess, channeling greater funding and media visibility toward men's divisions while leaving women's leagues marginalized. This historic bias creates an exclusionary athletic ecosystem that naturally deters female participation (McCormick, 2025). Korfball's foundational structure directly counters this systemic discrimination by legally mandating an equal team composition of exactly four men and four women on the court. This mixed-gender interaction provides an active space where male and female student-athletes compete on equal terms as mutual stakeholders. By making gender integration a core rule, the sport challenges the historical separation that has kept collegiate athletics divided for decades (Corbell, 2024).

Recent studies by Kettley-Linsell, H. (2022) indicate that the tactical constraints of Korfball systematically eliminate physical mismatch dominance and sex-based bias. Because the rules dictate that players can only defend or mark opponents of the same gender, the sport prevents physical intimidation or chauvinistic domination on the court. According to the International Korfball Federation Gender Policy, 2025, this co-educational format dismantles deep-seated athletic stereotypes. By embedding cooperation into the game mechanics, Korfball requires both sexes to share tactical execution and scoring duties equally. No single player can dominate the match through raw physical power, as success depends entirely on collaborative ball movement and collective spatial awareness. This rule re-socializes athletes to value skill, agility, and tactical intelligence over sheer physical mass or gender-based athletic assumptions (Gubby and Wellard, 2018).

In Kenyan universities, female sports participation is continuously hindered by institutional neglect, restrictive cultural norms, and unequal access to training facilities. This neglect leaves female university sports championships with fewer resources and limited development opportunities (Kariuki, 2019). By challenging the rigid structures of conventional, single-sex sports, Korfball offers an inclusive avenue that elevates female leadership on campus. It provides a unique micro-environment where women hold equal competitive authority, fostering broader institutional respect across the student population (Gubby, 2016).

Perceived Physical, Mental, and Social Health Benefits Among University Students

According to Werneck *et al.*, 2019. The contemporary university student population faces rising rates of sedentary lifestyles, academic anxiety, and social isolation. Korfball offers a dynamic, high-intensity athletic alternative that directly addresses these physical wellness gaps among the youth. The game completely forbids dribbling or running with the ball, forcing players to execute constant off-the-ball movements, agile pivots, and rapid tactical switches (Clemente *et al.*, 2025).

This unique structural demand enhances cardiorespiratory fitness, refines spatial coordination, and maximizes caloric expenditure across all participants, regardless of prior sports experience. The interval nature of the sport promotes high-intensity cardiovascular conditioning without the monotonic strain associated with traditional endurance running. Korfball provides an efficient physiological workout that aligns well with the limited free time of busy university students (Ma'mun *et al.*, 2022).

Psychologically, Korfball reduces performance-related anxiety and sports-induced intimidation, which are common barriers for beginners in traditional university sports. Because success depends on tactical synchronization and collective passing rather than individual raw physical dominance, it builds a supportive environment for diverse skill levels (Bhalero, 2020). The collaborative nature of the sport lowers psychological

distress, triggers positive emotional coping mechanisms, and reduces the drop-out rates often observed among female student-athletes (Nizam *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the inclusive framework of the game enhances student self-efficacy and psychological resilience by providing frequent opportunities for positive reinforcement. When players contribute equally to scoring and defending, it builds a strong sense of personal competence and institutional belonging. This mental empowerment directly counters the high levels of academic stress and imposter syndrome frequently documented among students in competitive higher education environments (Chowdhury, 2024).

Socially, university athletics serve as a powerful engine for building peer support structures and building lasting social capital. Korfball fosters a highly inclusive community dynamic by actively bridging the typical social divide between male and female student populations on campus. When men and women cooperate under equal conditions toward a shared athletic goal, they form bonds of mutual respect and accountability that extend beyond the sports court (Gubby and Wellard, 2016).

Frameworks for Institutionalizing Mixed-Gender Sports in University Programmes

Institutionalizing a new sporting discipline within existing collegiate structures requires shifting from occasional open tournaments to a structured administrative model. Bureaucratic inertia often leaves university athletic boards prioritizing legacy, single-sex sports while sidelining innovative mixed-gender formats due to habit or familiarity (Kelley *et al.*, 2018). Without a formalized, policy-backed administrative framework, innovative sports like Korfball remain highly vulnerable to leadership transitions and shifting student interests. Institutionalization ensures that the sport becomes a permanent part of the university's structural identity rather than a temporary trend. This systemic shift requires creating official university clubs, updating athletic department guidelines, and establishing clear lines of accountability for sports development (Jinkin, 2025).

A key logistical argument for institutionalizing Korfball is its exceptional cost-effectiveness and minimal infrastructure requirements. Unlike traditional disciplines that demand massive capital investments for specialized facilities, Korfball can operate on standard rectangular fields or existing basketball courts using portable posts and a ball. This low economic barrier makes it an excellent choice for financially constrained Kenyan universities aiming to diversify their athletic offerings (Nafziger, 2021).

Formalizing the sport requires integrating it into the administrative blueprints of the KUSF, ensuring it transitions from an exhibition game into a fully funded, mandatory championship sport. Once embedded into the official KUSF national calendar, universities are structurally incentivized to allocate resources toward team development, training camps, and league travel. This high-level alignment secures institutional legitimacy and elevates the sport's profile across the nation (Kubai, 2021). Universities must intentionally recruit and train female technical officials, referees, and coaches to maintain the sport's core message of equality. This structural inclusion ensures that the leadership overseeing the discipline reflects the gender-balanced principles of the game itself (Hietala and Archibald, 2021).

Aligning university athletic frameworks with international models; such as the UNESCO "Fit for Life" Initiative; provides the legal and regulatory support required to secure long-term funding. By establishing structured certification pathways for referees and coaches at the grassroots level, universities can build the administrative capacity needed to maintain long-term programs. This global alignment elevates the academic institution's reputation as a progressive center for inclusive educational and athletic development (Postlethwaite and Byrne, 2025.)

The framework must incorporate clear monitoring, evaluation, and learning components to track participation rates and health outcomes over time. Gathering empirical data on student engagement helps sports directors justify continued funding to university senates and external corporate sponsors. By demonstrating measurable benefits through structured institutional data, the framework provides a sustainable pathway for Korfball to thrive within the highly competitive collegiate sports landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to investigate the potential of institutionalizing Korfball as a gender-equal sport within Kenyan university sports programmes. The design enabled the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, providing a comprehensive understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and experiences. The target population comprised 200 stakeholders drawn from universities affiliated with the Kenya Universities Sports Association (KUSF), including student-athletes, sports administrators, physical education directors, and sports officers. The sample size of 57 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967); Using a population of 200 and a precision level of 10%, the recommended sample size was approximately 67 respondents. However, 57 completed questionnaires were successfully returned and analysed. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire comprising two sections. The first section captured biodata information such as gender, designation, and university type, while the second section contained closed-ended and open-ended questions on the institutionalization of Korfball. The closed-ended items were anchored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Quantitative respondents were selected through stratified random sampling, while purposive sampling was used to identify key informants for qualitative responses. The instrument was pilot-tested to ensure validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability. Data were analysed using R statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data, while Chi-Square tests, t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis were employed to examine relationships among variables. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically and integrated with quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with institutionalizing Korfball in Kenyan universities.

RESULTS

Respondent Biodata

The study involved 57 respondents drawn from stakeholders directly involved in sports administration and implementation in Kenyan universities. Biodata information was analysed based on gender, designation, and university type.

Table 4. 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	33	58.3
	Female	24	41.7
	Total	57	100.0
Designation	Sports Director	9	16.7
	Coach	19	33.3
	Captain/Student Representative	29	50.0
	Total	57	100.0
University Type	Public University	29	50.9
	Private University	28	49.1
	Total	57	100.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total sample size (N = 57).

Male respondents constituted 58.3% (n = 33) of the sample, while female respondents accounted for 41.7% (n = 24). The distribution provided perspectives from both genders, which was important in assessing Korfball's role in promoting gender equality and inclusive participation in university sports. Half of the respondents were Captains/Student Representatives (50.0%, n = 29), followed by Coaches (33.3%, n = 19) and Sports Directors (16.7%, n = 9). Student representatives provided insights from active participants, while coaches and sports directors contributed perspectives on programme implementation, management, and policy development. Respondents were drawn almost equally from Public Universities (50.9%, n = 29) and Private Universities (49.1%, n = 28). This balanced representation ensured that views reflected the diverse institutional contexts within Kenyan higher education, enhancing the applicability of recommendations for integrating Korfball into university sports programmes.

Gender Equality and Inclusive Participation

This section addresses the first specific objective of the study, which sought to examine the contribution of Korfball to promoting gender equality and inclusive participation in university sports programmes.

Gender Equality and Resource Access

The descriptive frequencies for the two primary indicator variables under this objective are detailed below.

Table 4. 2 Gender equality and resource access

Statement	Yes	No
Single sex sport	28	31
Equal Participation	12	47

Table 4.2 shows the perceptions of Funding Equity in Traditional Sports: When asked whether traditional single-sex sports (such as Football and Netball) offer equal access to resource funding for both genders at their universities, 47.5% (n = 28) of the respondents answered Yes, while a majority of 52.5% (n = 31) answered No. This demonstrates a prevalent perception among stakeholders that traditional sport structures perpetuate gender disparities, particularly regarding resource allocation and financial support. When evaluated against the statement that Korfball is actively promoted as a sport providing equal participation opportunities for all genders at their university, only 20.3% (n = 12) of the respondents answered Yes, while an overwhelming 79.7% (n = 47) answered No. This stark contrast underscores a substantial gap in institutional adoption: while Korfball is structurally designed to be a gender-equal sport, it has not yet been aggressively promoted or institutionalized across Kenyan universities.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

The inferential statistics in this study were conducted using an independent samples t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in participation scores between male and female respondents.

One-Sample t-Test for Gender Equality and Resource Access (Test Value = 0.50)

Table 4. 3 One-Sample t-Test for Gender Equality and Resource Access

Variable	Mean	SD	T	df	p
Traditional sports provide equal funding access	0.475	0.504	-0.38	58	.706
Korfball is promoted as a gender-equal sport	0.203	0.406	-5.61	58	< .001

Significant at $p < .05$.

The one-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether respondents' perceptions differed significantly from a neutral benchmark of 50% agreement. Based on table 4.3, the statement that traditional single-sex sports provide

equal access to resource funding for both genders, the mean agreement score was $M = 0.48$ ($SD = 0.50$). The result was not statistically significant, $t(58) = -0.38$, $p = .706$, indicating that respondents were almost evenly divided on whether traditional sports offer equitable resource allocation. The statement that Korfball is actively promoted as a sport providing equal participation opportunities for all genders recorded a significantly lower mean agreement score of $M = 0.20$ ($SD = 0.41$). The result was statistically significant, $t(58) = -5.61$, $p < .001$, suggesting that respondents overwhelmingly perceived that Korfball has not yet been adequately promoted within Kenyan universities despite its gender-inclusive design. These findings indicate that although stakeholders recognize challenges in achieving funding equity within traditional sports, the more pressing concern is the limited institutional promotion and adoption of Korfball. Consequently, efforts aimed at mainstreaming Korfball within university sports programmes may enhance opportunities for gender equality and inclusive participation.

The study concurs with the findings of **Laura Gubby and Ian Wellard (2015)**, who examined gender neutrality and equality in Korfball. Their study established that Korfball provides a unique environment for promoting gender equality and mixed-gender participation; however, its broader influence and adoption beyond the immediate playing environment remained limited. The researchers observed that although Korfball offers significant opportunities for sporting equality, institutional and societal structures often constrain its wider promotion and acceptance. These findings support the current study's conclusion that despite Korfball's gender-inclusive design, it has not been adequately promoted within institutions, thereby limiting its uptake and visibility among potential participants. The study also concurs with Bart Crum (1988), who argued that although Korfball was developed as a co-educational and gender-inclusive sport, its transformative potential depends largely on institutional commitment and structural support. Crum noted that the existence of a gender-equal sporting model alone does not guarantee widespread adoption or meaningful impact unless organizations actively promote and integrate the sport within their systems. This observation aligns with the present findings, which indicate that the major challenge is not the concept of Korfball itself but its limited institutional promotion within Kenyan universities.

Psychometric Evaluation.

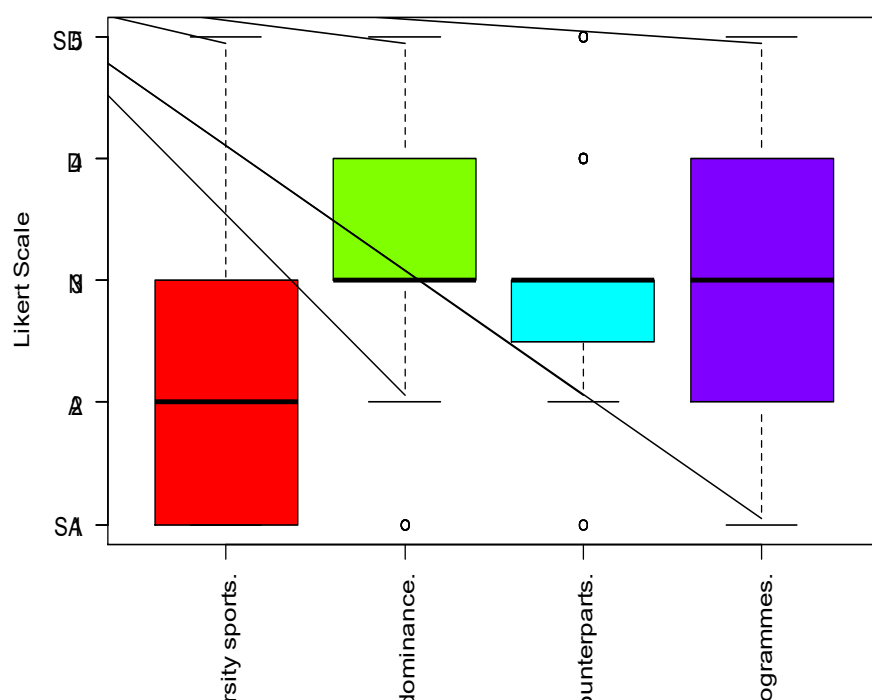


Figure 4. 1 Distribution by responses

Based on the figure 4.1, above, which was derived from the Likert-scale responses (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree) for each statement, the distributions reveal distinct patterns of student-athlete attitudes toward Korfball's impact on gender equity in varsity sports. For the first statement; "The mandatory mixed-gender composition of Korfball systematically breaks down gender silos"; the boxplot shows a median of 2 (Agree) with the interquartile range (IQR) spanning from 1 to 3, indicating that the majority of responses clustered between

Strongly Agree and Neutral, while the whiskers extend to 5 (Strongly Disagree) due to a minority of dissenting views. The second statement; “Korfball’s non-contact and spatial rules effectively neutralize traditional athletic biases”; presents a markedly different profile: the median falls at 3 (Neutral), the IQR stretches from 2 to 4, and the box is relatively wide, reflecting substantial dispersion and a lack of consensus, with nearly half of the respondents selecting Neutral. For the third statement—“Korfball provides female student-athletes with equal leadership, playtime, and visibility”—the boxplot again centres on a median of 3, but the IQR is narrower (2 to 3), and the upper whisker reaches only to 4 (Disagree) with no Strongly Disagree responses among the main body, suggesting that while most remain neutral, disagreement is mild and agreement is limited. Finally, the fourth statement; “Introducing Korfball corrects the historical underfunding and marginalization of female sports”; displays a median of 3, an IQR from 2 to 4, and symmetric whiskers from 1 to 5, indicating a balanced but polarized distribution where agreement, neutrality, and disagreement each hold substantial proportions. Generally, the boxplots illustrate that the strongest and most positive consensus is reserved for Korfball’s mixed-gender structure breaking down silos, whereas perceptions of its ability to correct systemic underfunding or provide truly equal opportunities remain far more divided and centred on neutrality. The study concurs with the findings of Hills, Maitland, Croston, and Horne (2020), who examined mixed-gender football and found that participation in mixed-gender sports can challenge traditional gender divisions and reduce stereotypical perceptions of male and female sporting roles. However, the researchers noted that while mixed-gender participation promotes social integration and breaks down gender barriers, it does not automatically transform broader institutional policies or structural inequalities. This finding aligns with the present study, where respondents strongly agreed that Korfball’s mixed-gender structure helps break down gender silos, but remained uncertain about its ability to address systemic underfunding and ensure equal opportunities.

Disruption of Gender Stereotypes Through Co-Educational Korfball

Based on the qualitative data collected from the same student-athlete sample, three representative responses to the open-ended question “How does the co-educational nature of Korfball actively challenge or disrupt existing gender stereotypes within your university’s sports culture?” are presented below. Two responses were selected;

“In traditional university sports like soccer, men’s teams are seen as the ‘main event’ and women’s teams as secondary. With Korfball, you can barely play without equal numbers of men and women on the court at the same time”. “Before Korfball, our sports culture assumed that men would naturally take charge during mixed-gender drills or scrimmages. But Korfball’s rules; no dribbling, no physical contact, and zoning that prevents gender-based marking; force everyone to rely on spatial intelligence and teamwork rather than brute strength.”

Perceived Physical, Mental, and Social Health Benefits

korfball participation

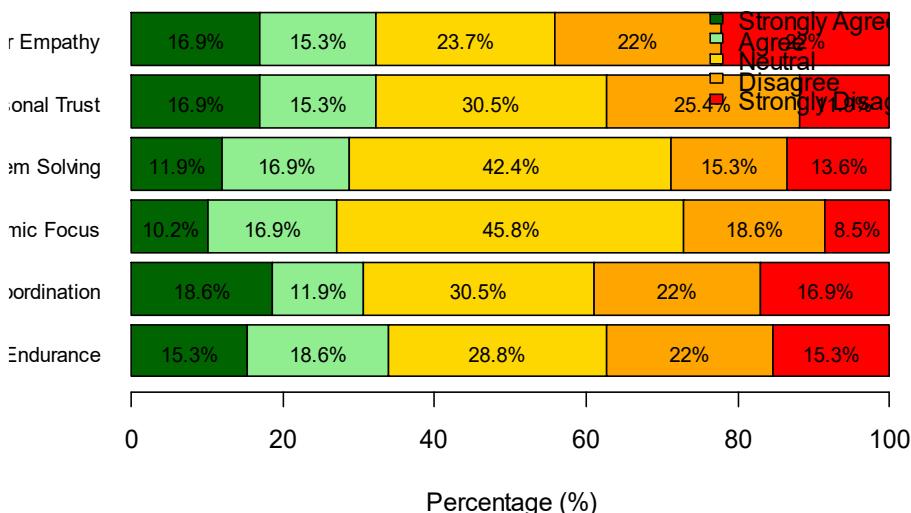


Figure 4. 2 Likert responses on korfball participation

Based on figure 4.2, the graph generated from the; physical, Mental, and Social Benefits of Korfball; For the Social dimension, respondents expressed generally low levels of agreement regarding the social benefits of Korfball. Concerning cross-gender empathy and reduced social isolation, only 32.2% of respondents agreed, while 38.9% disagreed and 23.7% remained neutral. Similarly, for interpersonal trust and social cohesion, agreement stood at 32.2%, compared to 42.3% disagreement and 30.5% neutrality. These findings suggest that most student-athletes do not perceive Korfball as having a substantial impact on fostering social cohesion, empathy, or interpersonal trust. For the Mental dimension, perceptions were largely neutral. Regarding enhanced problem-solving skills, 28.8% of respondents agreed, 28.9% disagreed, and the largest proportion (42.4%) remained neutral. Likewise, for stress reduction and improved academic focus, agreement and disagreement were both 27.1%, while 45.8% of respondents were neutral. The high proportion of neutral responses indicates uncertainty among participants regarding the mental benefits associated with Korfball participation.

For the Physical dimension, responses were slightly more favourable but still lacked majority support. On improved agility, coordination, and fitness, 30.5% of respondents agreed, 38.9% disagreed, and 30.5% were neutral. Regarding aerobic and cardiovascular endurance, agreement was highest among all indicators at 33.9%, compared with 37.3% disagreement and 28.8% neutrality. Although physical benefits received relatively stronger support than mental and social benefits, agreement remained below one-third of respondents. The findings indicate limited endorsement of Korfball's perceived benefits among student-athletes. Across all six indicators, agreement ranged from 27.1% to 33.9%, while disagreement ranged from 27.1% to 42.3%. Neutral responses were also substantial, ranging from 23.7% to 45.8%. When the indicators are considered collectively, the average positive response was approximately 30.8%, compared to 35.6% negative responses and 33.6% neutral responses. These results suggest that respondents neither strongly support nor consistently experience the proposed physical, mental, and social benefits of Korfball, highlighting the need for greater exposure, participation, and awareness of the sport within Kenyan universities.

MANOVA Results for Perceived Physical, Mental, and Social Health Benefits of Korfball

(N = 59)

Table 4. 3 MANOVA result

Multivariate Test	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p
Pillai's Trace	0.513	0.703	3	2	0.632
Wilks' Lambda	0.487	0.703	3	2	0.632
Hotelling's Trace	1.053	0.703	3	2	0.632
Roy's Largest Root	1.053	0.703	3	2	0.632

Dependent variables: Physical Benefits, Mental Benefits, and Social Benefits.

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed among groups regarding the perceived physical, mental, and social health benefits of Korfball participation. The multivariate test yielded Wilks' Lambda = 0.487, $F(3, 2) = 0.703$, $p = 0.632$. Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was no statistically significant multivariate effect. This indicates that respondents across the groups held similar perceptions regarding the overall benefits of Korfball.

The physical dimension was measured using two indicators: aerobic endurance and agility/coordination. For aerobic and cardiovascular endurance, 33.9% (n = 20) of respondents agreed, 28.8% (n = 17) were neutral, and 37.3% (n = 22) disagreed. Similarly, for agility, coordination, and physical fitness, 30.5% (n = 18) agreed, 30.5% (n = 18) were neutral, and 39.0% (n = 23) disagreed. Overall, the physical dimension recorded an average agreement level of approximately 32.2%, indicating limited endorsement of Korfball's physical health benefits.

The mental dimension assessed stress reduction, academic focus, and problem-solving skills. Regarding stress reduction and academic focus, 27.1% (n = 16) agreed, 45.8% (n = 27) were neutral, and 27.1% (n = 16) disagreed. For problem-solving skills and focus, 28.8% (n = 17) agreed, 42.4% (n = 25) were neutral, and 28.8% (n = 17) disagreed. Overall, the mental dimension showed the highest proportion of neutral responses, averaging 44.1%, suggesting uncertainty among respondents concerning the mental benefits of Korfball participation. The social dimension examined interpersonal trust, social cohesion, and cross-gender empathy. For interpersonal trust and social cohesion, 32.2% (n = 19) agreed, 30.5% (n = 18) were neutral, and 37.3% (n = 22) disagreed. Similarly, 32.2% (n = 19) agreed that Korfball promotes cross-gender empathy and reduces social isolation, while 23.7% (n = 14) were neutral and 44.1% (n = 26) disagreed. Overall, the social dimension recorded an average agreement level of 32.2%, with disagreement averaging 40.7%.

Across all six indicators, positive responses ranged from 27.1% to 33.9%, while negative responses ranged from 27.1% to 44.1%. Neutral responses remained substantial, ranging from 23.7% to 45.8%. When aggregated across the three dimensions, average agreement was approximately 31.7%, compared to 35.7% disagreement and 32.6% neutrality. The MANOVA results, together with the descriptive statistics, suggest that respondents generally shared similar perceptions of Korfball's physical, mental, and social benefits. However, none of the dimensions achieved majority agreement, indicating that student-athletes did not strongly perceive Korfball as providing substantial health and social benefits. The findings point to the need for greater awareness, participation opportunities, and institutional support to enhance understanding of the sport's potential contributions to student well-being.

The study disagrees with the findings of Eime Rochelle and colleagues (2013), who conducted a systematic review on the psychological and social benefits of sport participation. Their study found that participation in organized sports is associated with improved physical health, enhanced self-esteem, better social interaction, reduced stress, and stronger social connectedness among participants. The researchers concluded that sports provide significant physical, mental, and social benefits, particularly when participation is regular and supported by institutions. In contrast, the present study found that respondents did not strongly perceive Korfball as providing substantial health and social benefits, as agreement levels remained below the majority threshold across all dimensions. These differences may be attributed to the relatively low awareness, limited participation opportunities, and minimal institutional support for Korfball within Kenyan universities. The findings also disagree with the study by Brett Smith and David McDonough (2008), which reported that engagement in organized sports contributes positively to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social integration among young adults. The authors found that sports participation fosters teamwork, social support networks, and positive psychological outcomes. While their findings highlighted strong perceived benefits of sport participation, the current study revealed considerable neutrality and disagreement regarding Korfball's physical, mental, and social benefits. This suggests that respondents may not yet have sufficient exposure to Korfball to fully appreciate its potential contributions to student well-being.

Framework for Institutionalization

Perceptions of Korfball as a Framework for Gender Equity in University Sports

Table 4. 4 Perceptions of Korfball as a Framework for Gender Equity in University Sports

Psychometric Variable	SA (1)	A (2)	N (3)	D (4)	SD (5)
Breaking Gender Silos	20 (35.6%)	15 (27.1%)	11 (18.6%)	3 (5.1%)	8 (13.6%)
Neutralizing Athletic Biases	5 (8.5%)	8 (13.6%)	26 (45.8%)	7 (11.9%)	11 (20.3%)
Equal Leadership and Visibility	3 (5.1%)	12 (20.3%)	30 (52.5%)	7 (11.9%)	5 (10.2%)
Addressing Female Sport Marginalization	9 (15.3%)	11 (18.6%)	20 (35.6%)	9 (15.3%)	8 (15.3%)

Table Note: Values are presented as percentages with frequencies in parentheses; N = 57. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate generally mixed perceptions regarding the institutionalization of Korfball as a framework for promoting gender equity in university sports. Across all four themes, responses are largely dominated by neutrality (45.8%–52.5%) and moderate agreement (20.3%–27.1%), suggesting that most respondents neither strongly reject nor fully endorse the proposed gender equity outcomes. The most notable positive outcome is Breaking Gender Silos, where 62.7% (35.6% strongly agree and 27.1% agree) of respondents expressed agreement. This represents the highest level of support across all variables, indicating that students most strongly associate Korfball with promoting mixed-gender interaction and reducing gender segregation in sports participation.

In contrast, the most dominant response pattern appears in Neutralizing Athletic Biases and Equal Leadership and Visibility, where neutral responses are highest at 45.8% and 52.5% respectively. This suggests that respondents are largely uncertain about Korfball's effectiveness in addressing entrenched perceptions of male athletic superiority and in creating equal leadership opportunities and visibility for both genders.

For Addressing Female Sport Marginalization, responses are more dispersed, with neutral (35.6%) and agree (33.9%) emerging as the two most prominent figures. This indicates moderate recognition of Korfball's potential to reduce historical inequalities affecting female athletes, though uncertainty remains substantial.

Overall, the results suggest that while Breaking Gender Silos stands out as the most strongly supported outcome, Neutrality and Moderate Agreement dominate the remaining dimensions. This implies that Korfball is primarily recognized for its structural inclusivity, but its broader impact on equity outcomes such as leadership, bias reduction, and marginalization remains inconclusive among respondents.

Chi-Square test Korfball as a Framework for Gender Equity in University Sports

Table: Chi-Square Test of Likert Responses

Korfball Participation Statements

Statement	χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
Aerobic Endurance	42.44	4	0.000	Significant
Agility & Coordination	39.90	4	0.000	Significant
Stress & Focus	5.32	4	0.256	Not Significant
Problem Solving	16.00	4	0.003	Significant

Note. Chi-square test compares observed responses against equal expected distribution.

Figure 4. 3 Chi-Square test of likert response

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to determine whether the distribution of Likert-scale responses (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) for each Korfball statement differed significantly from an equal distribution across the five response categories. The results indicate that respondents' perceptions varied across the statements. For Aerobic Endurance, the chi-square value was 42.44 with $df = 4$ and $p < .001$, indicating a statistically significant difference from an equal distribution. This suggests that respondents showed a clear preference toward certain response categories rather than responding evenly across all options. Similarly, Agility and Coordination recorded a chi-square value of 39.90 ($p < .001$), demonstrating a significant departure from a uniform distribution. This finding indicates that student-athletes held more definite views regarding the contribution of Korfball to agility, coordination, and physical fitness.

For Problem-Solving Skills, the chi-square value was 16.00 ($p = .003$), which was also statistically significant. The result suggests that perceptions of Korfball's role in enhancing tactical thinking and problem-solving abilities were not evenly distributed across response categories. In contrast, Stress Reduction and Academic Focus yielded a chi-square value of 5.32 with $p = .256$, indicating no statistically significant difference from an equal distribution. This suggests the absence of a clear consensus among respondents regarding Korfball's influence on

stress management and academic focus, with opinions distributed relatively evenly across the Likert categories. Overall, the findings show that three of the four indicators; Aerobic Endurance, Agility and Coordination, and Problem-Solving Skills; exhibited statistically significant response patterns, indicating that respondents held more distinct views on these aspects of Korfball. However, perceptions regarding Stress Reduction and Academic Focus remained inconclusive, reflecting uncertainty about the sport's mental health benefits. The study partially concurs with the findings of Eime Rochelle et al. (2013), who reported that participation in organized sports contributes to the development of cognitive, motor, and psychosocial skills among participants. The researchers found that sports activities enhance coordination, agility, teamwork, and decision-making abilities, while evidence regarding psychological outcomes such as stress reduction and mental well-being was less consistent across different sporting contexts and participant groups. This aligns with the present study, where respondents expressed clearer perceptions regarding Korfball's contribution to agility, coordination, and problem-solving skills, but remained uncertain about its influence on stress reduction and academic focus. The findings suggest that while the sport's physical and cognitive benefits may be more readily observable, its mental health benefits may require greater exposure and participation to be fully recognized by student-athletes.

Policy Reforms for Permanent Competitive Status

The respondents were asked; What key policy changes must be enacted at both individual university levels and nationally through KUSF to ensure Korfball achieves permanent, competitive status? Three responses were selected;

Response 1; "KUSF should require that any university receiving sports development grants allocates equal budget, coaching, and facilities for mixed-gender Korfball alongside traditional single-gender sports."

Response 2; "Individual universities must amend their athletic constitutions to include Korfball as a scoring sport, while KUSF enforces a minimum number of inter-university matches per season for ranking eligibility."

Response 3; "Policies should reserve varsity letters and partial scholarships for Korfball athletes, similar to existing men's and women's teams, to incentivize long-term commitment and recruitment."

Step-by-Step Roadmap to Institutionalized Varsity Sport

The respondents were asked; Outline a step-by-step roadmap or framework strategy that your institution could realistically employ to move Korfball from a recreational pastime to a fully institutionalized varsity sport.

Phase 1 (0–6 months): Recreational pilot; "Establish a weekly co-ed Korfball club with open registration, secure intramural field space, and collect participation data to demonstrate student demand." Phase 2 (6–12 months): Competitive club status; "Form a university-affiliated team, hire a part-time coach, schedule friendly matches with nearby institutions, and apply for provisional membership in KUSF's development circuit." Phase 3 (12–24 months): Full varsity transition; "Submit a proposal to the athletic board showing sustained enrollment, competitive results, and gender equity metrics; negotiate a dedicated practice slot, operating budget, and inclusion in annual varsity fixtures."

CONCLUSION

The descriptive analysis revealed that while 52.5% of respondents perceived traditional single-sex sports as providing unequal access to resources and funding, only 20.3% indicated that Korfball was actively promoted as an equal-opportunity sport within their institutions. Findings from the Likert-scale analysis showed strong support for Breaking Gender Silos, with 62.7% of respondents agreeing that Korfball's mixed-gender structure helps reduce gender segregation in sports. However, support for other dimensions was considerably lower. Agreement levels for Neutralizing Athletic Biases, Equal Leadership and Visibility, and Addressing Female Sport Marginalization ranged between 22.1% and 33.9%, with large proportions of respondents remaining neutral. Qualitative findings further suggested that Korfball has the potential to challenge traditional stereotypes through shared participation, leadership opportunities, and greater visibility for both genders. However, these benefits

appear to occur in isolated cases rather than as a result of established institutional practices. Therefore, H_{01} is partially rejected. The findings suggest that Korfball contributes to reducing gender segregation, but its broader role in promoting gender equality and inclusive participation remains limited by weak institutional support and insufficient promotion.

The analysis showed that agreement levels across the six health indicators ranged from 27.1% to 33.9%, while neutral responses ranged from 28.8% to 45.8% and disagreement ranged from 27.1% to 42.3%. The MANOVA results (Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.487$, $p = 0.632$) indicated no significant differences in perceived benefits across respondent groups. Similarly, although chi-square tests showed significant response patterns for aerobic endurance, agility and coordination, and problem-solving skills, these patterns were not characterised by strong positive agreement. Instead, responses were largely neutral or negative. The stress reduction and academic focus indicator produced no significant response pattern ($p = 0.256$), indicating a lack of consensus regarding mental health benefits. Consequently, H_{02} is accepted. The findings do not provide sufficient evidence that Korfball participation generates substantial physical, mental, or social health benefits as perceived by student-athletes.

Results from the institutionalisation analysis revealed that only Breaking Gender Silos achieved majority support (62.7% agreement). The remaining themes recorded relatively low endorsement: Neutralizing Athletic Biases (22.1%), Equal Leadership and Visibility (25.4%), and Addressing Female Sport Marginalization (33.9%). Qualitative findings identified several structural requirements for successful institutionalisation, including co-educational funding policies, inclusion of Korfball in university sports regulations, scholarship opportunities, coach training, and partnerships with sports governing bodies. The findings suggest that current institutional structures are not sufficiently developed to support widespread adoption of Korfball. Therefore, H_{03} is accepted. Existing structural factors do not adequately support the institutionalisation of Korfball, highlighting the need for deliberate policy reforms, resource allocation, and strategic partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Universities and KUSF should develop clear policies to promote Korfball as a gender-inclusive sport through awareness campaigns, exhibition matches, and integration into student orientation programmes. Since **62.7%** of respondents agreed that Korfball helps break gender silos, universities should use it as a flagship co-educational sport to encourage interaction and collaboration between male and female athletes. Institutions should strengthen gender-inclusive leadership structures by ensuring equitable opportunities for captaincy, team representation, and public recognition of both male and female athletes.

Universities should be cautious when presenting Korfball as a health intervention since respondents did not strongly perceive substantial physical, mental, or social benefits. Greater emphasis should be placed on improving programme implementation through regular training sessions, qualified coaching, and increased participation opportunities. Future evaluations of health outcomes should incorporate objective measures such as fitness assessments, performance tests, and psychological well-being indicators rather than relying solely on self-reported perceptions.

Universities should adopt a phased approach to institutionalisation, beginning with recreational club status, progressing to competitive club participation, and ultimately integrating Korfball into varsity sports programmes. KUSF should encourage universities to incorporate co-educational sports within their sports development strategies and provide guidance for Korfball adoption. Formal partnerships between universities, KUSF, and the Kenya Korfball Federation should be established to support coach training, officiating certification, competition structures, and resource mobilisation.

Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of Korfball participation on physical fitness, social integration, and academic outcomes. Undertake comparative studies between universities that have institutionalised Korfball and those that have not to determine the effectiveness of institutional support mechanisms. Expand future research to include sports administrators, policymakers, and governing bodies to provide a broader understanding of the factors influencing Korfball adoption and sustainability.

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