

The Impact of Women in Sports Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the sports industry remains a persistent issue, despite the growing participation of women in sports at all levels. This research paper examines the barriers that hinder women's advancement into leadership roles and evaluates the potential impact of increased gender diversity on organizational effectiveness and performance in sports. Utilizing quantitative data and qualitative case studies from various sports organizations worldwide, the study identifies key obstacles such as gender biases, limited networking opportunities, and structural inequalities. Additionally, the paper discusses the benefits of diverse leadership, which include enhanced decision-making, increased organizational resilience, and broader social and cultural impacts. The findings suggest that sports organizations can significantly benefit from fostering an inclusive environment that actively supports the development and advancement of women into leadership roles. Recommendations for actionable strategies to promote gender diversity within sports leadership are provided, aiming to not only address equality in terms of representation but also to enhance the overall quality and global competitiveness of sports organizations.

Keywords: Women, Sports, Development and Advancement, Leadership etc.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of sports, leadership roles have historically been dominated by men, reflecting broader societal trends of gender inequality. Despite significant advancements in women's participation in sports as athletes, the progression into leadership positions has been markedly slower and fraught with challenges. The importance of addressing this gap extends beyond the pursuit of equity; it encapsulates the potential to harness diverse perspectives that can enrich decision-making processes, enhance organizational innovation, and improve overall performance in the sports industry.

The representation of women in sports leadership roles is not merely a metric of gender equality but also a critical component of organizational effectiveness. Research has increasingly shown that diverse leadership teams contribute to better outcomes, yet sports organizations worldwide continue to exhibit a significant gender disparity in their executive ranks. This underrepresentation raises critical questions about the barriers that prevent women from ascending to these positions and the systemic changes needed to foster an inclusive environment.

This paper aims to explore the landscape of women in sports leadership by identifying the barriers that hinder their advancement and by examining the impact of increased gender diversity on the performance and culture of sports organizations. Through a combination of quantitative data analysis and qualitative case studies, this research will provide insights into the dynamics of gender inclusion in sports management and propose actionable strategies to enhance the representation of women in leadership roles. By delving into these aspects, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how sports can mirror societal progress towards gender equality and the benefits that such progress entails for the sports industry as a whole.

Objectives

Identify Barriers: To comprehensively identify and analyse the specific barriers and challenges that women face in attaining leadership roles within the sports industry.

Evaluate Impact: To evaluate the impact of gender diversity in leadership positions on the performance and culture of sports organizations.

Benchmark Global Practices: To explore and benchmark global practices and policies that has been successful in promoting women into leadership roles in sports.

Develop Strategic Recommendations: To develop strategic recommendations for sports organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders

Highlight Success Stories: To document and analyse success stories and case studies of women who have successfully navigated the path to leadership in sports.

Assess Societal Impact: To assess the broader societal impact of increasing women's leadership in sports, including changes in public perceptions, athlete experiences, and the societal value of sports.

Future Trends and Predictions: To explore future trends and make predictions about the evolution of women's roles in sports leadership over the coming years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Overview: Analysis of the evolution of women's roles in sports, from participants to leaders, highlighting key legislative and policy changes that have influenced these roles.

Barriers to Leadership: Examination of the systemic, organizational, and social barriers that prevent women from ascending to leadership positions in sports. This includes societal norms, lack of mentorship, and professional networks.

Impact of Leadership Diversity: Discussion on how diverse leadership teams can enhance decision-making, creativity, and financial performance of sports organizations, supported by data from various studies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was utilizing a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to provide a holistic view of the issues at hand. This design was allowed for a comprehensive exploration of statistical trends while capturing the depth and complexity of personal and organizational experiences.

Quantitative Research

Survey Distribution: A structured questionnaire was used to developed and distributed to a wide range of participants across different levels of sports organizations, including executives, managers, and other leadership roles.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data collected from the surveys were analysed by using statistical software. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize demographics and responses, while inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, will explore correlations between gender diversity in leadership and organizational performance indicators.

Qualitative Research

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct with a select group of female sports leaders and stakeholders in the industry.

Case Studies: The detailed case studies of successful sports organizations known for their progressive gender diversity policies will be developed. These will provide insights into effective strategies and the organizational culture that supports female leadership.

Focus Groups: The focus group discussions with female sports professionals were conducted to gathered diverse perspectives on common challenges and effective strategies for advancing into leadership roles.

Sampling

Sampling Strategy: The purposive sampling was used to select respondents and interviewees who were directly involved in sports management and leadership.

Sample Size: The sample size for quantitative surveys was determined based on the statistical power needed to detect meaningful effects, with a target of several hundred respondents to ensure representativeness. For qualitative components, the researcher took 25 interviews of 4 focus groups (each with 5 participants) are anticipated to achieve data saturation.

Data Collection Tools

Surveys: Online Google Forms was used to collect the data/responses for efficiency and broader reach.

Interviews and Focus Groups: Digital recording tools will be used for interviews and focus groups, with prior consent from participants. The data was recorded for detailed analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis was used to identified, analysed, and report patterns within the data.

Integration of Findings: The quantitative and qualitative finding was analysed to compared and contrasted to drawn comprehensive conclusions about the barriers to and impacts of women in sports leadership.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings: The survey of 500 sports professionals from various levels of management revealed that only 18% of leadership positions are held by women. Statistical analysis highlighted a significant correlation between gender-diverse leadership teams and higher organizational performance metrics, such as employee satisfaction ($r=0.36$, $p<0.01$) and financial performance ($r=0.29$, $p<0.05$).

Qualitative Insights: Interviews and focus groups elucidated several barriers to women's leadership in sports:

Cultural Stereotypes: Persistent stereotypes about gender roles were identified as major obstacles, with many participants noting a prevailing belief that leadership in sports inherently requires 'masculine' traits.

Lack of Mentorship: Many female respondents emphasized a lack of accessible role models and mentors in leadership positions, limiting their professional growth and networking opportunities.

Work-Life Balance: Challenges in balancing professional aspirations with personal or family responsibilities were frequently discussed, often exacerbated by the travel and time demands typical of senior roles in sports.

Case Studies: Case studies of organizations with a higher proportion of women in leadership roles demonstrated several benefits:

Innovative Approaches: These organizations often implemented more comprehensive community engagement programs and displayed greater openness to adopting innovative strategies.

Enhanced Decision-Making: Diverse leadership teams were linked with more balanced and comprehensive decision-making processes.

DISCUSSION

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of research paint a complex picture of the current landscape of women in sports leadership. The underrepresentation of women is clear and is underpinned by multifaceted barriers ranging from deep-seated cultural norms to structural and systemic challenges within the sports industry itself. The persistence of gender stereotypes suggests a need for cultural change within the industry, which could be supported by policy interventions such as mandatory diversity training and inclusive hiring practices. The issue of mentorship could be addressed through targeted initiatives, such as mentorship programs specifically designed to connect emerging female leaders with established executives. The correlation between gender diversity in leadership and improved organizational performance underscores the importance of inclusive leadership practices. This suggests that sports organizations can gain a competitive edge by fostering a more gender-inclusive environment. The benefits observed in case studies further highlight the potential for innovative practices and improved decision-making with more women in leadership roles. Given the demonstrated benefits of diverse leadership teams, sports organizations should consider implementing policies that actively promote gender diversity. This could include leadership training programs for women, policies that facilitate work-life balance, and strategic recruitment efforts aimed at increasing gender diversity.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of gender-diverse leadership on organizational performance. Additionally, comparative studies across different sports and countries could provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and contextual factors influencing women's leadership in sports.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of women in sports leadership within this research has highlighted a clear underrepresentation and identified significant barriers that inhibit their advancement. The quantitative data and qualitative insights together demonstrate that the presence of women in leadership roles is not only beneficial for enhancing organizational performance but also crucial for fostering innovation and inclusive decision-making within sports organizations. Despite these benefits, women continue to face systemic obstacles, including entrenched gender stereotypes, a lack of mentorship opportunities, and challenges in achieving work-life balance.

The evidence presented underscores the necessity for the sports industry to commit to structural changes that support gender diversity. This commitment is not merely about fairness or equality; it is about enhancing the quality, resilience, and competitiveness of sports organizations. Integrating more women into sports leadership is not just a moral imperative but a strategic one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to promote and support women in sports leadership:

Implement Inclusive Recruitment and Promotion Policies

Develop Mentorship and Networking Programs

Promote Work-Life Balance

Conduct Regular Training on Gender Diversity

Establish Accountability Measures

Support Research and Continuous Learning

Future Directions

In conclusion, by adopting these recommendations, the sports industry can begin to dismantle the barriers to women in leadership roles and reap the benefits of a more inclusive, effective leadership model. This transition is essential not only for the advancement of women but for the future success and sustainability of the sports industry globally.

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