



EXPLORING GENDER EQUITY IN OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GOVERNANCE: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Abstract - Gender balance remains a fundamental concern in the evolution of the Olympic movement. Major issues such as equitable participation of male and female athletes and parity within its leadership are at the forefront of discussions. Scholars have shown gender imbalance in sports governance, with men holding a disproportionate share of power compared to women. This study examines the composition of the governing bodies of national Olympic and Paralympic committees. It aims to understand how gender equality representation in national bodies is compounded by the traditions of the sport associated with men, maintaining the gender gap in leadership. The findings highlight persistent disparities in gender representation in the governance structures of Olympic and Paralympic committees, despite variations among countries. These differences underscore the varying gender equality standards among participating nations, necessitating targeted interventions to address underlying societal inequalities. This article seeks to enhance understanding of the multiple factors shaping gender equality in the Olympic domain by providing insight into the dynamics surrounding gender balance at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The results of these analyses could inform future initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion within the Olympic movement.

Keywords: gender equality, gender balance, Olympic values, leadership, national context.

EXPLORANDO A EQUIDADE DE GÊNERO NA GOVERNANÇA OLÍMPICA E PARALÍMPICA: DESAFIOS E PERSPECTIVAS

Resumo - O equilíbrio entre os gêneros continua sendo uma preocupação fundamental na evolução do movimento olímpico. Questões importantes, como a participação igualitária de atletas masculinos e femininos e a sua liderança, estão na linha de frente das discussões. Estudos mostram um desequilíbrio entre os gêneros na governança esportiva, com os homens ocupando uma porção desproporcional de poder em comparação com as mulheres. Este estudo analisa a composição dos órgãos dirigentes dos comitês olímpicos e paraolímpicos nacionais. O objetivo é entender como a representação da igualdade de gênero nos órgãos nacionais é agravada pelas tradições do esporte associadas aos homens, mantendo a desigualdade de gênero na liderança. Os resultados destacam diferenças persistentes na representação de gênero nas estruturas de governança dos comitês olímpicos e paraolímpicos, apesar das variações entre os países. Essas diferenças destacam os diversos padrões de igualdade de gênero entre as nações participantes, necessitando de intervenções direcionadas para abordar as desigualdades sociais existentes. Este artigo busca melhorar a compreensão dos diversos fatores que moldam a igualdade de gênero na esfera olímpica, fornecendo uma visão da dinâmica que envolve a desigualdade de gênero nos Jogos Olímpicos e Paraolímpicos. Os resultados dessas análises podem servir de base para futuras iniciativas destinadas a promover a diversidade e a inclusão no movimento olímpico.

Palavras-chave: igualdade de gênero, equilíbrio de gênero, valores Olímpicos, liderança, contexto nacional.

EXPLORANDO LA EQUIDAD DE GÉNERO EN LA GOBERNANZA OLÍMPICA Y PARALÍMPICA: DESAFÍOS Y PERSPECTIVAS

Resumen - El equilibrio entre hombres y mujeres sigue siendo una preocupación fundamental en la evolución del movimiento olímpico. Cuestiones tan importantes como la participación equitativa de atletas masculinos y femeninos y la paridad en el seno de su dirección ocupan un lugar destacado en los debates. Los estudiosos han puesto de manifiesto el desequilibrio de género en la gobernanza deportiva, en la que los hombres ostentan una cuota de poder desproporcionada en comparación con las mujeres. Este estudio examina la composición de los órganos de gobierno de los comités olímpicos y paralímpicos nacionales. Su objetivo es comprender cómo la representación de la igualdad de género en los órganos nacionales se ve agravada por las tradiciones del deporte asociadas a los hombres, lo que mantiene la brecha de género en el liderazgo. Las conclusiones ponen de relieve la persistencia de disparidades en la representación de género en las estructuras de gobierno de los comités olímpicos y paralímpicos, a pesar de las variaciones entre países. Estas diferencias ponen de relieve los distintos niveles de igualdad de género entre las naciones participantes, lo que requiere intervenciones específicas para abordar las desigualdades sociales subyacentes. Este artículo pretende mejorar la comprensión de los múltiples factores que determinan la igualdad de género en el ámbito olímpico, proporcionando una visión de la dinámica que rodea el equilibrio de género en los Juegos Olímpicos y Paralímpicos. Los resultados de estos análisis podrían servir de base para futuras iniciativas destinadas a promover la diversidad y la inclusión en el movimiento olímpico.

Palabras-clave: igualdad de género, equilibrio de género, valores olímpicos, liderazgo, contexto nacional.

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[http://dx.doi.org/
10.30937/2526-
6314.v8.id190](http://dx.doi.org/10.30937/2526-6314.v8.id190)

Received: 22 apr 2024

Accepted: 30 jul 2024

Published online: 22
aug 2024

This research was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, grant number 622774-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-SPO-SCP.

Introduction

From their origins, sports competitions have been organized in a gender binary model and with the belief dominated by the idea that gender is an indisputable pillar to divide sports competitions. Gender binary has produced the idea of men and masculinity opposite to women and femininity¹. Men have dominated sports, and everyday language, symbols and representations reinforce the patriarchal dominance and ideological gender stereotypes within the sports context². Indeed, the construction of gender in sport is deeply embedded in societal structures and the meanings attributed to sport, leading to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and inequalities³. Furthermore, the segregation of sports by gender and the categorization of sports as masculine or feminine fuel gender inequality in sports by limiting participation opportunities for women⁴. This is compounded by the fact that participation in sports clubs is often limited to sports traditionally associated with men, maintaining the gender gap in sports⁵.

Various research highlights the persistence of gender inequality in sports governance, particularly in decision-making positions, which remains a significant problem^{6,7}. In sports governance, informal organizational practices and gender stereotypes contribute to the under-representation of women in leadership positions, perpetuating the idea that leadership roles are primarily reserved for men⁸. Studies show a common gender imbalance in sports governance, with men holding a disproportionate share of power compared to women⁹. As the majority, men can reinforce ideologies, structures and practices that allow them to maintain their status and privilege in sports¹⁰. Board membership symbolizes desired status and a valued position to gain appreciation. Moreover, deeply rooted discriminatory judgments against women in sports normalize and maintain resistance to gender equity within sport's governing bodies¹¹.

According to the International Olympic Committee's Gender Equality and Inclusion Report 2021¹², 48 % of the athletes in Tokio 2020 were women. Although athlete participation was equal, only 20 % of the leaders of the national delegations and 13 % of coaches were women. The governing bodies of the National Olympic Committees have also long been marked by an under-representation of women. In 2020, women represented 8 % of NOC Presidents and 16 % of NOC secretaries general¹².

Following the data, there is no evidence that increasing athletes' equality reduces the gender gap in leadership positions. Although progress has been made at the Olympic Games, the issue of gender balance in participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the organizations' support staff and delegations remains. The IOC recommends that NOCs improve gender balance by including at least 30 % of women in national delegations¹³. Considering the research emphasizing inequalities surrounding leadership roles, setting the goal under 50 % deliberates the effectiveness of the movement's pressure towards parity.

In addition, the International Paralympic Committee and several National Paralympic Committees have committed to addressing gender balance across the movement, recognizing gender gaps and the need for parity¹⁴. The Paralympic Games' commitment to universalism has thus prioritized including people with disabilities. This leads to a broader objective of promoting diversity and gender balance within the movement¹⁵. The issue of gender balance in sports governance is not limited to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as evidenced by the examination of gender diversity in the governance structures of national sports organizations by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee and the Inclusion Scorecard¹⁶. It can also be examined at the intersection of different factors that have been studied separately, such as the governance of governing bodies and the participation of athletes in the games.

The issue of gender balance, equality and equity in sports encompasses various aspects such as participation, sports governance, leadership, and social perceptions that drive them. The intersection of sport, leadership and gender provides insight into the normalization of men and masculinity in leadership roles, perpetuating gender imbalances¹⁷. Despite decades of work improving gender equity, stakeholder positions remain a status quo. Privileged people make decisions that affect millions of participants and impact sports culture worldwide. As a result, gender equity policies rarely have implications or act on sports governmentality. Women face obstacles such as glass-gliff or leadership labyrinths^{18,19}. The continued under-representation of women in leadership positions results from ideological and structural barriers created within sporting organizations²⁰.

This article concentrates on leadership by exploring the recurring issues surrounding equality at the Olympic Games, focusing on the representation of women

and men in national governing bodies. This study investigates what initiatives have helped to increase women's presence in these decision-making bodies in different countries. In particular, the aim is to gauge whether there are more favorable or pioneering national contexts regarding the balanced representation of women and men in decision-making bodies. Examining current trends in various countries aims to highlight the structural and cultural obstacles that can help or hinder the full realization of equality in this sporting event. This analysis sheds light on how these factors interact and can influence overall performance at the Olympic Games. In other words, it explores the nuances of gender equality in the specific context of Olympic committees while considering national variations in the advancement of women's rights in emblematic Europe.

Methodology

The work stems from the Sport without Stereotypes (SWOST) project, which aimed to create national reports for each country representing the current state of Olympic committee leadership and Olympic participation. It is based on data collected by the nine partners involved in the project: Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland, and Turkey. While most of the analysis is based on the European context, Turkey counterbalances some data.

This work is based on secondary data analysis, a method commonly used in scientific research. It has proven to be an effective tool for assessing the gender distribution of members within the different National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) of the nine countries participating in the project. This approach, well established in the methodological literature, allows data already collected by other sources to be exploited to generate new insights and perspectives.

The first step in our methodology involved rigorously identifying available data sources. We examined official documents published by the NOCs and NPCs and consulted national and international reports addressing representation issues in sports. This process ensured the quality and relevance of the data analyzed.

Following data collection, a meticulous compilation phase was undertaken. Information regarding the composition of the committees' governing bodies, including

member count and gender distribution, was systematically extracted, and organized. This stage necessitated careful handling to maintain data integrity and prevent potential bias.

The collected data was then categorized based on different roles, positions, and powers. This strategy aimed to identify trends and disparities in gender representation within the NOCs and NPCs. Cross-tabulations were performed in Excel to analyze variations between countries.

Our findings were interpreted in accordance with the study's objectives, elucidating the practical and theoretical implications of observed gender representation trends within NOCs and NPCs (21). In doing so, we contribute substantively to the scholarly discourse on governance and gender equity in sports administration.

However, it is essential to note that our study has some limitations. The secondary data used in this study may not be entirely accurate or up-to-date, and there may be discrepancies in the data collection methods used by the different NOCs and NPCs. Furthermore, our study does not consider other factors influencing gender representation in these committees, such as cultural or societal norms in the respective countries. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating primary data collection methods and considering a broader range of influencing factors.

Results

Leadership and gender equality in National Olympic and Paralympic Committees

It is imperative to discern the various aspects of power across distinct positions within governing bodies, particularly within leadership. In this context, we draw upon the concept of governance articulated by Charreaux and elaborated upon by Bayle²², encapsulating "[...] all the organizational mechanisms that delineate the powers and influence the decisions of leaders, thus governing their conduct and defining their latitude for action (p. 124)". While Bayle elucidates the three dimensions of organizational, political, and systemic factors, with inspiration from Henry, our focus pertains primarily to the organizational dimension. Our interest lies specifically in delineating power dynamics within the National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, categorizing governing bodies based on their roles (political, managerial, and operational) and decision-making authority²². In addition to their political decision-making process, governing bodies of nonprofit sports organizations, such as the Olympic Committees,

assume managerial and operational functions. Moreover, they may operate at the confluence of these diverse roles and powers.

The initial phase of our analysis is dedicated to scrutinizing gender equality within the National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, aiming to gauge the degree of gender inclusivity within these entities. Our examination encompasses an array of data concerning committee composition, pivotal decisions, and policies pertinent to gender-related issues. We have categorized the governing bodies of the Olympic and Paralympic Committees based on their decision-making power or political role. First, we analyze gender equality within the president, vice president, or general secretary posts. Second, we investigate managerial roles and the interface between decision-making power and operational roles.

Chairmanship, Vice-Chairmanship, General Secretariat, Treasurer

The first analysis focuses on positions with strong political power or role and therefore significant decision-making power, such as the presidency, vice-presidency, general secretariat or treasurer and the Board of Directors within the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Paralympic Committees (NPCs).

Table 1 - Gender representation in NOC's board of directors (Presidency, Vice-Presidency, General Secretariat, Treasurer).

| Country | Women | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|-----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 1 | 25 | 3 | 75 |
| Finland | 4 | 80 | 1 | 20 |
| France | 5 | 45 | 6 | 55 |
| Italy | 2 | 33 | 1 | 77 |
| Latvia | 1 | 25 | 3 | 75 |
| Montenegro | 1 | 33 | 2 | 67 |
| Serbia | 0 | 0 | 2 | 100 |
| Turkey | 1 | 35 | 3 | 65 |
| Switzerland | 1 | 50 | 1 | 50 |

Source: author.

The distribution of positions associated with power or political roles within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) reveals a nuanced diversity of representation between men and women across different countries, as summarized in Table 1. Broadly, men occupy most positions, with a notable absence of women presidents across all nine countries analyzed. However, noteworthy variations exist among countries. Finland stands out as the sole country where women surpass men in these leadership roles. Switzerland demonstrates gender parity, while France exhibits relative gender balance. In contrast, women are in the minority or entirely absent from influential positions in the remaining countries. These findings underscore the persistent imperative to scrutinize gender equality and women's access to leadership positions within sports governance bodies. In contrast, observations of gender distribution from the Paralympic Committees diverge from those of the Olympic Committees (Table 2).

Table 2 - Gender representation in NPC's board of directors (Presidency, Vice-Presidency, General Secretariat, Treasurer).

| Country | Women | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 1 | 50 | 1 | 50 |
| Finland | 2 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| France | 3 | 50 | 3 | 50 |
| Italy | 0 | 0 | 2 | 100 |
| Latvia | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100 |
| Montenegro | 3 | 21 | 11 | 79 |
| Serbia | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100 |
| Turkey | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100 |
| Switzerland | 0 | 0 | 2 | 100 |

Source: author.

The tabulated data illuminates several noteworthy trends pertaining to gender disparities, female participation rates, and data consistency.

Belgium and France exhibit a commendable balance between male and female representation within their respective committees, whereas Italy, Latvia, and Montenegro demonstrate a pronounced imbalance, notably skewed towards male dominance.

Remarkably, Finland emerges as an outlier with an exclusively female composition, underscoring the nation's robust commitment to fostering and advocating for women's involvement in Paralympic sports.

The absence of data for Turkey and Switzerland (NA) underscores a glaring gap in data collection or accessibility. Such opacity complicates the comprehensive evaluation of Paralympic participation rates.

In contrast to the data concerning Olympic Committees, the analysis reveals a slight elevation in female representation within Paralympic Committees, particularly in political positions. Notably, women assume Committee President roles in countries like France and Belgium, a phenomenon absent within Olympic Committees.

Board of Directors

The boards of directors of the Olympic and Paralympic Committees serve as pivotal leadership entities, bridging the gap between political authority and operational management. They function as vital intermediaries, providing a necessary balance to the Management Committees within the organizational structure (Table 3 and 4).

Table 3 - Gender breakdown of the Board of Directors (Olympic Committees).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 5 | 25 | 15 | 75 |
| Finland | 7 | 47 | 8 | 53 |
| France | 17 | 30 | 39 | 70 |
| Italy | 6 | 35 | 11 | 65 |
| Latvia | 2 | 9 | 20 | 91 |
| Montenegro | 2 | 12 | 15 | 88 |
| Serbia | 4 | 24 | 13 | 76 |
| Turkey | 6 | 35 | 11 | 65 |
| Switzerland | 4 | 33 | 8 | 67 |

Source: author.

Table 4 - Gender distribution of the Board of Directors (Paralympic Committees).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 2 | 33 | 4 | 67 |
| Finland | 2 | 40 | 3 | 60 |
| France | 8 | 50 | 8 | 50 |
| Italy | 5 | 36 | 9 | 64 |
| Latvia | 1 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Montenegro | 0 | 0 | 5 | 100 |
| Serbia | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100 |
| Turkey | 1 | 10 | 9 | 90 |
| Switzerland | 2 | 33 | 4 | 67 |

Source: author.

A comparative analysis of the composition of boards of directors across Olympic and Paralympic Committees yields diverse observations.

Among Olympic committees, women account for an average of approximately one-third of board positions, ranging from 9% in Latvia to 47% in Finland. Conversely, men occupy a predominant majority of board seats across most countries, typically comprising two-thirds or more of members.

Conversely, concerning Paralympic committees, although data remains incomplete for many countries, a discernible trend towards greater gender parity, and in some instances, majority female representation, emerges. Notably, countries like Latvia exemplify this trend, where a woman holds the sole identified position. But, the percentages need to be tempered, as the number of women is higher in some countries than in others, and contrasts with the percentage in both the Olympic and Paralympic committees. However, there are still major inequalities between men and women. Indeed, the stark disparity between the Olympic and Paralympic committees underscores the critical need for sustained attention and intentional measures to foster gender equity within these pivotal bodies of sports governance.

Managerial and operational positions

The data of the managerial roles within the Olympic and Paralympic Committees unveils a diverse distribution of decisive and operational positions across genders, as elucidated in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 - Gender breakdown Governing Board, finance, human resources (NOC).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 5 | 24 | 16 | 76 |
| Finland | 8 | 50 | 8 | 50 |
| France | 11 | 46 | 13 | 54 |
| Italy | NA | | NA | |
| Latvia | 10 | 37 | 17 | 63 |
| Montenegro | NA | | NA | |
| Serbia | NA | | NA | |
| Turkey | 2 | 20 | 8 | 80 |
| Switzerland | NA | | NA | |

Source: author.

Table 6 - Gender breakdown Governing Board, finance, human resources (NPC).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 4 | 31 | 9 | 69 |
| Finland | 7 | 70 | 3 | 30 |
| France | 12 | 40 | 18 | 60 |
| Italy | NA | | NA | |
| Latvia | NA | | NA | |
| Montenegro | NA | | NA | |
| Serbia | NA | | NA | |
| Turkey | NA | | NA | |
| Switzerland | NA | | NA | |

Source: author.

These data underscore a comparatively equitable representation of genders in certain countries, exemplified by Finland and France, whereas others, like Turkey, demonstrate more pronounced disparities in favor of men.

Moreover, the availability and comprehensiveness of data pertaining to National Olympic Committees (NOCs) appear to surpass that of National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), possibly indicating a heightened emphasis on governance matters within Olympic Committees relative to Paralympic Committees.

Operational positions: various committees, including the Gender and Equity Committee

Tables 7 and 8 present the gender distribution of operational positions within the Olympic and Paralympic committees of the respective countries. These committees encompass diverse functions, including representation, supervision, and advisory roles across various committees such as ethics/discipline, legal, athletes, gender and equity, and selection, among others.

Table 7 - Breakdown by gender in various commissions (NOCs).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 29 | 34 | 56 | 66 |
| Finland | 17 | 53 | 15 | 47 |
| France | 24 | 51 | 23 | 49 |
| Italy | 1 | 50 | 1 | 50 |
| Latvia | 10 | 34 | 19 | 66 |
| Montenegro | NA | | NA | |
| Serbia | NA | | NA | |
| Turkey | 42 | 45 | 52 | 55 |
| Switzerland | 7 | 41 | 10 | 59 |

Source: author.

Table 8 - Breakdown by gender for various Commissions (NPCs).

| Country | Woman | | Men | |
|-------------|-------|----|-----|----|
| | n | % | n | % |
| Belgium | 4 | 31 | 9 | 69 |
| Finland | 7 | 70 | 3 | 30 |
| France | 19 | 41 | 27 | 59 |
| Italy | NA | | NA | |
| Latvia | NA | | NA | |
| Montenegro | NA | | NA | |
| Serbia | NA | | NA | |
| Turkey | NA | | NA | |
| Switzerland | NA | | NA | |

Source: author.

The provided data pertains to the gender distribution among members across various commissions within the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Paralympic Committees (NPCs).

Upon scrutiny of the data presented in the two tables, discernible variations emerge in the gender composition of NOC and NPC commissions. Nevertheless, the absence of comprehensive data for all countries in both tables poses challenges in drawing definitive conclusions regarding overarching trends.

Notably, parity in gender representation is evident within the Olympic Committees of France and Finland. Finland particularly stands out for achieving majority female representation within its Paralympic Committee, implying the presence of effective gender equality policies in Paralympic sports governance.

It is essential to acknowledge the limitation posed by missing data, which may constrain the depth of our analysis. However, collectively, these figures underscore a degree of diversity in gender representation within the decision-making bodies of the National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, albeit with disparities persisting across different countries.

Discussion

The data across various sources underscores a prevalent trend of male predominance in the leadership roles of National Olympic and Paralympic Committees, albeit with occasional exceptions. Examining the distribution of male and female leadership positions and participants in the governing bodies by country emphasizes the significance of promoting global gender equality in sports. Representation variation may mirror national sports policies, available infrastructures, and each country's unique sporting traditions and cultures.

Leadership and gender balance in National Olympic Committees

The findings accentuate notable gender disparities within sports governance bodies, a trend corroborated by previous research that identified a systemic underrepresentation of women in leadership roles^{9,23}. Examining positions of political authority such as the presidency, vice presidency, general secretariat, or treasury reveals an overarching male predominance, notwithstanding sporadic exceptions, and substantial inter-country variations. While certain nations exhibit relatively balanced gender representation, others feature an absence of women in positions of power. These disparities may stem from diverse factors, encompassing entrenched social norms, gender stereotypes, structural barriers like the glass ceiling, and unconscious biases in candidate selection processes.

This study corresponds with previous research outcomes on gender inequality in sports. Scholars have shown that women fail to reach leadership positions and have limited opportunities for demanding roles¹⁰. The glass ceiling metaphor implies an invisible obstacle, privileging men in governing bodies. Moreover, women are more likely to be elected for a leadership position in an organization with underperformance and precarious leadership roles²³. Women's lack of support and networks secure successful director positions for men. Women's challenges can be described as a leadership labyrinth, including intertwined challenges and obstacles when attempting to break structural and societal constraints¹⁹.

Prevalent masculine leadership narratives are intertwined in attitudes and beliefs, often leading to social stereotypes⁶. Crafting strategies to foster gender equity in sports necessitates a nuanced understanding of national particularities. Country-specific

cultural, political, and socio-economic factors may influence national sports governance and attitudes to gender equality contributions. Gender imbalances within governance bodies can engender less inclusive and representative policies. Hence, concerted efforts must be directed towards promoting equitable gender representation to engender fairer and more efficacious sports policies. Moreover, advancements in gender equality initiatives and efforts to encourage women's participation in traditionally male-dominated disciplines can also shape these patterns. Taking action to change conditions and climate in sports governance must be emphasized. Stereotypes and passive resistance can be undone, and the power of individuals can be used to create equitable conditions and climate⁷.

More inclusive Paralympic committees

In the comparative analysis of data between Olympic and Paralympic Committees, a consistent observation emerges: Paralympic Committees tend to exhibit slightly more excellent representation of women in political roles than their counterparts in Olympic Committees. Notably, specific Paralympic Committees boast female Presidents, a phenomenon absent within Olympic Committees. This disparity may be partly attributed to proactive sports policies prioritizing gender inclusion and leadership diversity within Paralympic organizations.

However, it is imperative to underscore that in many countries, efforts to fortify gender representation and enact inclusive policies within sports governance need reinforcement. A significant challenge arises from the dearth of visibility surrounding initiatives undertaken, primarily due to the scarcity of accessible data. This opacity impedes comprehensive assessment and accountability, underscoring the pressing need for enhanced transparency and documentation of gender-focused interventions within sports administration.

Limitations and extension of the study

It is imperative to acknowledge the deficiencies in data collection or accessibility, exemplified by the absence of data in certain countries. Such lapses in transparency pose significant challenges to endeavors to evaluate or advance gender equality within the sporting domain. In essence, these findings underscore the pressing need for sustained

deliberation concerning gender parity and the integration of women into the governance structures of sports. Moreover, concerted efforts are warranted to ascertain the completeness and transparency of data collection processes.

In this manuscript, our primary focus lies on the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. However, we reference the Winter Games to underscore their relevance in discussions surrounding gender equity within sporting events. Notably, data accessibility for the Winter Games is even more limited than for the Summer Games, underscoring the necessity for more comprehensive and detailed research in the future.

Acknowledging the divergent levels of data accessibility evident across NOCs and NPCs, which may reflect disparate governance priorities and underscore distinct imperatives vis-à-vis data collection and monitoring. A comparative analysis spanning multiple nations is indispensable for elucidating the multifaceted cultural, political, and social dynamics that underpin gender representation within sports governance bodies. Such an endeavour would entail a comprehensive examination of the policies and initiatives implemented by disparate nations to bolster women's participation in sports and governance roles.

Conclusion

The findings of this study marked an increase in the representation of women within governing bodies. Despite advancements in certain regions, the data unequivocally illustrates a prevailing trend wherein men predominantly occupy leadership roles, with women frequently underrepresented or absent. This empirical observation aligns seamlessly with existing academic literature, which consistently underscores the formidable barriers encountered by women seeking entry into sports governance positions. Recognizing the profound influence wielded by the composition of governance bodies on national sports policies is paramount. Gender disparities within these structures can precipitate the formulation of less inclusive and representative policies.

An in-depth examination of data about managerial and operational capacities within Olympic Committees (NOCs) and Paralympic Committees (POCs) illuminates glaring disparities in gender representation across diverse national contexts. While certain nations exhibit a relatively balanced distribution of men and women in managerial roles, others evince stark discrepancies characterized by male dominance. The variegated

landscape of gender representation across nations underscores the imperative of tailoring interventions to each context's unique cultural, political, and social milieu, thus facilitating the advancement of gender equity in sports.

Consequently, a pressing need arises for incentives and supportive measures to foster a more equitable participation of women within sports governance bodies, thereby fostering enhanced athlete engagement. A more granular understanding of the composition of support staff accompanying athletes could furnish invaluable insights into the influence of gender balance within these roles on athletes' performance and well-being. A detailed analysis of the composition of support staff accompanying athletes participating in the Olympic and Paralympic Games would be pertinent to advance the scope of inquiry. Such an endeavor promises to furnish a nuanced understanding of the ramifications of gender balance within these support teams on athletes' performance, well-being, and the broader sporting milieu.

Examining the correlation between gender representation in Olympic sports and the presence of women in governance may unveil some surprising patterns. A positive correlation might emerge if Olympic sports featuring female categories correlate with improved representation of women in sports governance bodies. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that correlation does not imply causation. Organizational culture, gender policies, and power dynamics could influence women's representation in sports governance. A comprehensive analysis would entail scrutinizing the demographics of Olympic sports governing bodies and contrasting them with gender distributions across various Olympic sports.

Hence, improving gender equality among athletes will not influence gender balance in leadership positions if the image of a manager remains the same. Governing bodies must explicitly raise awareness of how stereotypes influence organizational practices that support the status quo and hinder equality. Moreover, the stereotypical association of gender-related characteristics must be challenged. It is of utmost importance for management in sports organizations to deeply comprehend the barriers that hinder women from taking leadership positions. By doing so, they can implement supportive strategies such as mentoring and male allies, which could significantly contribute to women's success in leadership roles. Moreover, addressing supportive

strategies such as mentoring and male allies could support women's flourishing in leadership positions.

Deeply embedded historical roots are complex, and changing unequal gender balance requires long-term plans. This will require improving gender equity at all levels, including government, athletes, and coaches. A more diverse coaching force could bring insights into sports and its practices. Women as role models in various leadership positions will encourage more women to participate in decision-making in the Olympic Sports governance. To ensure the change, sports policies and environments need to ensure a safe, transparent and equal environment.

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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

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