

ACHIEVING OPTIMAL TEAM PERFORMANCE THROUGH GENDER INCLUSIVENESS IN SPORTS ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gender roles and gender stereotype are social constructs and presumably, could influence the number of females that should be occupying administrative positions in organisations. In a patriarchal society such as Nigeria, such stereotype could lead to over representation of males in sports. The study, therefore, sought to examine if gender inclusiveness in the sports officials/administrators of a team could yield better performance of the team. Secondary data of the seventy-six universities that formally registered with the Local Organising Committee and participated in the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA 2022), which was hosted by the University of Lagos was used. Descriptive and inferential analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). The result shows a positive correlation between number of female officials and total number of medals won at the NUGA competition ($r = .607, p < 0.01$). Also, linear regression shows that an addition female official in a team, increases the total medals won by three (3). There is therefore, need to engage stakeholders in sports on the need for gender inclusiveness in sports in order to achieve optimal team performance.

Keywords: Gender inclusiveness, Medals, Performance, Sports administration, Sports officials

1. INTRODUCTION

The society over the years have a preconceived personality of the female gender as a refined element that should be handled with so much tenderness and tailored for jobs that are not so physically demanding. Perhaps, females have internalized this social construct of gender roles which seemingly restrict their involvement in certain professions or activities. One of such activities is in the area of sports, most of which require dissipation of energy, and sometimes travel demands, during competitions. Globally, sports have gone beyond recreational activities and emerged as means of gainful employment for the players, administrators and officials. However, the gendered roles and stereotyping of females could create an unequal representation, especially at the administrative levels which perhaps, could affect team performance. This inequality in gender diversity could be more prominent in sub-Saharan Africa, where gender imbalance is high. In 2023, The Global Gender Gap Index published by World Economic Forum which included 146 countries and had four cardinal areas of Health and Survival Gender gap, Educational Attainment gap, Economic Participation and Opportunity Gap and Political Empowerment Gap placed Nigeria (4.1%) as one of the six lowest parity scores in Political Empowerment, above Iran (3.1%), Lebanon (2.1%), Vanuatu (0.6%) and Afghanistan (0%). Conceivably, Nigeria performance is not a far cry from the findings of International Labour Organization (2015) on women on board of directors in 307 companies from 12 African countries where Nigeria had 11.5% which was below African average of 12.7%. However, the world of sports where administrators are hired and fired much more rapidly than any other profession, perhaps, a consideration of gender diversity could improve outcomes and reduce the risk of job losses. The study was, therefore, aimed at answering the following research questions.

1. What is the relationship between number of female administrators in a sports team and the productivity of the team?
2. Could men-dominated sports administrators in a team lower productivity of the team?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature was reviewed on the relationship between the influence of female administrators on team performance and the relationship between men-dominated sports administrators and teams' productivity. The five sections to the paper are, the introduction, review of current and relevant literature and theoretical framework that explains the work, the method applied for the study, the results, and conclusion and recommendations.

Female administrators in a sports team and the performance of the team

Gender equity implies that women should also, be beneficiaries of the advantages that sports offers, both for financial empowerment and for enhancement of mental wellbeing (Bull *et al.*, 2020; Granger *et al.*, 2017; Pawlowski *et al.*, 2011). In the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equity is a key to the agenda, and gender equity is a good way of doing business and the outcome of such equity could imply progress for all (The Research and Data section of UN Women, 2014). Despite the importance of gender equity, previous studies had shown that women are underrepresented in decision making positions that perhaps, attracts good remuneration (Blau *et al.*, 2013; Blau & Kahn 2017; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009; Gobillon *et al.*, 2015; Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2016; Thomas *et al.*, 2017). Some of the reasons for this underrepresentation had been attributed to the female gender not being too keen in taking risks, exhibiting lower level of competitiveness, cultural and socio-economic challenges surrounding the female gender (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Pratt, 2021; Shurchkov & Eckel, 2018; Yu & Schwingel, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2017). A study involving 45 countries revealed that global average of women representation as board directors is 20%, board chairs (11%) and chief executives (16%) (Adriaanse, 2016).

The low representation of women in leadership positions is more glaring among sports officials or administrators (Spaij *et al.*, 2015). The presence of women in a team as officials or administrators could serve as a role model to the female players and perhaps, enhance their active participation (Tingle *et al.*, 2014). This seemingly corroborated previous studies that linked sizeable number of women in the classroom, enhancing the educational progress of female students (Black *et al.*, 2013; Hill 2017; Lavy & Schlosser 2011). To demonstrate that number of females could be a facilitator, the United States in Summer Olympic Games 2016, in Rio de

Janeiro, presented a large contingent of female athletes (292) which outnumbered their male counterparts. The female athletes won 61 medals which was higher than any group, irrespective of gender or country of participation in the games (Title ix & athletics, 2017).

Men-dominated administrators in a team lower productivity

The new normal in sports is to give a possibly level playing ground for everybody in different sporting roles, otherwise known as equity in sports or gender inclusiveness. However, most times in practice, the number could be tilted, more often in favour of males. When there is over-representativeness of a particular gender (such as males) to the tune of at least three-quarters (75%) of the total number, it could be stated that the team is men-dominated (De Mel *et al.*, 2009).

Male-dominated environment is not only reflected in sports, such imbalance is also visible in healthcare delivery, where despite the females representing 70% of the healthcare workforce globally, just have a quarter of the women in senior positions and just 5% representation in leadership position (Batson *et al.*, 2021; Pérez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2021; WHO, 2019). When community-based sports are considered in Australia, twice the number of males participate than the females (Eime *et al.*, 2020). Perhaps, the male-dominated environment could be ascribed to how sports is being perceived, as encompassing winning at odds through aggression and violence (English, 2017) which the female gender could be averse to. The perceived attributes of sports and the male-dominated nature, could be a draw-back to the women's push towards occupying their place in expertise in the administrative roles in sports (Sarsons 2017; Shurchkov & van Geen, 2017; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips 2004). It is therefore, envisaged that with gender equity in sports, the women's influence in sports could be enhanced and this could moderate equitable power structure in sports administration (Elsey & Nadel, 2019; Piepiora & Petecka, 2020) and enhance the outcomes of the team.

However, study by Bowers *et al.* (2000) showed that gender diversity did not improve team performance to a statistically significant level. In this study, diversity included variables such as ability, attitude, gender, or personality of the respondents. In this study, however, we are concerned about how the right-mix of the gender of the sports officials or administrators, influence the team performance.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Feminist theory (especially the liberal feminism) created by Mary Wollstonecraft and expressed in her writing “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” in 1792. Liberal feminist theory aims at promoting gender equality in the socio-economic, political and other areas of life, so as to minimize the oppression and subordination of women (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018). The subordination of women could be attributed to a faulty societal orientation that perceives women nature as, having less mental capacity and much less physical ability compared to men (Tong, 2009). However, mental capacity, physical resilience among others, are some of the attributes needed in sporting activities, be it as players, officials and administrators. The subordination could also come in form of gendered roles, where females are made to be occupied with domestic chores and other non-paying duties, while men have the freedom to participate in sporting activities even if it involves travelling some distances. This could mean that some female sports officials might be tied down with domestic affairs and excuse themselves from attending sports events, especially for distant competitions. The subordination of women by men could also mean that permissions need be taken before females could attend some competitions. It is believed that gender equity could usher in a level playing ground that could enhance females’ active involvement that would improve the team’s performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study deployed secondary data that involved universities that participated in the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA), hosted by the University of Lagos in 2022. The secondary data was obtained from the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the NUGA competition. The total number of universities that officially registered with the LOC and had complete data for analysis was 76. Data obtained from the universities included: total number of male athletes (2,929) representing the 76 universities, total number of female athletes (1,956), total number of male officials (904) that came with the universities, total number of female officials (176) that came with the universities’ team. The host university was not included in the analysis, as the number of officials could not be ascertained. Also, the records of the number of medals (Gold, Silver, Bronze, Total) won by each university at the end of the games was

obtained. All the data was collected in continuous variables. The data collected was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 Distribution of universities that participated in the NUGA 2022

Category of University	Frequency	Percent
Federal Universities	34	44.7
State Universities	34	44.7
Private Universities	8	10.5
Total	76	100.0

Table 1 shows that federal universities represented 44.7%, state universities 44.7% and private universities represented 10.5% at the NUGA, 2022 event.

Table. 2 Descriptive statistics of female officials and medals won during NUGA, 2022

Type of Medals won	Percentage of female officials	No. of participating universities	Mean of Medals won at NUGA, 2022	Std. Dev.
Gold	0% female officials	27	1.63	3.60
	1 – 29% female officials	36	1.31	1.92
	30% & above female Officials	13	5.77	16.74
	Total	76	2.18	7.33
Silver	0% female officials	27	1.52	3.00
	1 – 29% female officials	36	1.92	2.68
	30% & above female Officials	13	3.62	8.01
	Total	76	2.07	4.15
Bronze	0% female officials	27	2.74	4.39
	1 – 29% female officials	36	3.42	4.31
	30% & above female Officials	13	5.23	9.18
	Total	76	3.49	5.44
Total Medals	0% female officials	27	5.89	10.56
	1 – 29% female officials	36	6.64	8.19
	30% & above female Officials	13	14.62	33.16
	Total	76	7.74	16

Table 2 shows that the average medals won increases with increasing number of percentages of female representation. Hence, the average number of medals won (mean of medals) is highest when percentage of female representation is 30% and above. The only exception is for average number of golds won, where 27 universities without female officials have higher average gold won (1.63) than 36 universities with 1 to 29% of female officials (1.31).

Table. 3 Descriptive statistics and correlation of gender representation and medals won

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Female officials	2.3	3.3								
2. Male officials	11.9	8.7	.160							
3. Female athletes	25.7	24.3	.590**	.555**						
4. Male athletes	38.5	32.0	.381**	.710**	.748**					
5. Total athletes	64.4	52.9	.504**	.696**	.919**	.955**				
6. Gold	2.2	7.3	.673**	-.163	.325**	.117	.222			
7. Silver	2.1	4.2	.571**	-.113	.309**	.175	.251*	.902**		
8. Bronze	3.5	5.4	.443**	-.047	.246*	.166	.219	.766**	.870**	
9. Total medals	7.7	16.0	.607**	-.120	.313**	.155	.241*	.953**	.969**	.917**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$, $N = 76$

Table 2 shows a male-dominated sports environment, the mean of all the female athletes is 25.7, while the mean of all the female officials was 2.3 (ratio 1:8 of female official to female athletes). However, the mean of all the male athletes is 38.5, while the mean of all the male officials is 11.9 (ratio 1:4 of male official to male athletes). The ratio of female officials to total officials is 0.16 (16%). There is a high positive correlation between female officials and winning gold ($r = .673$, $p < 0.01$), moderate positive correlation between female officials and silver medals won ($r = .571$, $p < 0.01$) and low positive correlation between number of female officials and number of bronze medals won ($r = .443$, $p < 0.01$). Also, there is a high positive correlation between female officials and number of total medals won in the competition ($r = .607$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4. Model summary of the influence of gender inclusiveness on total medals won at NUGA 2022

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
				R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
.646	0.417	0.401	12.38	0.42	26.125	0.000

Table 4 shows that the value of R-square is 0,417. This implies that number of female and male officials (independent variables) in a team only explained the total medals (dependent variable) won in 42% of the cases.

Table 5 The ANOVA of the influence of gender inclusiveness of the institution's team officials on the total medals won at NUGA 2022

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8007.401	2	4003.701	26.125	0.000
Residual	11187.336	73	153.251		
Total	19194.737	75			

Table 5 shows that the model is a good fit $F(2, 73) = 26.125$, $P < 0.001$ and the two independent variables, female officials and male officials have significant impact on the total medals won.

Table 6. Multiple linear regression of the influence of gender inclusiveness of the institution's team officials on the total medals won at NUGA 2022

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	5.376	2.515		2.138	0.036	0.364	10.388
Male Officials	-0.409	0.166	-0.223	-2.46	0.016	-0.741	-0.078
Female Officials	3.121	0.439	0.643	7.103	0.000	2.245	3.997

Dependent variable: total medals won

Table 6 shows that presence of a female official in a team has a positive relationship with the total medals won. Increasing the number of female officials in a team by 1 would lead to increasing the total medals won by 3 ($B = 3.121$, $t = 7.103$, $p < 0.001$). However, having an additional male official in the team will decrease the number of medals won by 0.4 ($B = -0.409$, $t = -2.46$, $p < 0.05$).

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined how a team's performance can be enhanced through having an equitable gender representation of the officials or administrators taking care of the team during sports festivals such as NUGA in Nigeria. Two research questions were explored on the relationship between the number of female sports administrators in a team and the productivity of the team, and if men-dominated sports administrators could lower the productivity of a team?

The descriptive statistics shows that the highest average number of medals (Gold, Silver, Bronze) was achieved when a university has at least 30% of the administrators or team officials being females. More so, there is a medium to high correlation between number of female officials in a university's team and winning bronze, silver and gold. The findings substantiated the first research question that, there is a positive relationship between the number of female administrators in a team and the team's performance. This finding corroborated the "Title ix and Athletes" (2017) in the United States, where a large number of female contingents to Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro yielded 61 medals, the highest in any group in that competition.

However, the ratio of male to total officials / administrators is 0.84 (84%), therefore, the team officials representing each university in the 2022 NUGA could be described as being male-dominated, since the percentage representing male officials is more than 75% (De Mel, McKenzie & Woodruff, 2009). There is a low and negative correlation between the number of male officials and winning any of the medals (gold, silver and bronze) at the NUGA, 2022. This could be due to the male-dominated number of officials leading to over-representativeness of the male officials and seemingly, producing a diminishing return. The multiple regression analysis also shows a negative relationship between the number of male's officials and the total medals won at the NUGA 2022 competition, perhaps a confirmation that undue high representation of male sports officials reduces the team's performance.

The stakeholders in sports, should therefore, be intentional in choosing or electing sports officials or administrators, to have the right gender-mix for effectiveness. Perhaps, this implies that, there is a critical mass of females' representation among the sports administrators that could yield optimal outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study was aimed at exploring the influence of gender inclusiveness (at administrative level) on team performance and how over-representation of a particular gender could lower team productivity. Efforts had been made at different fora to enthrone gender equity in our society, however, sports environment still demonstrates male-dominance at decision-making level. It is becoming quite clear that to achieve gender inclusiveness at administrative level in sports, perhaps, some legislation and enforcement could be of help. This becomes more compelling given the fact that improving the percentage of female sports officials enhances outcome of the team, while male-dominated officials in the team tends to lower total medals won. In the future, researchers could explore the right-mix of gender inclusiveness that could produce the best outcomes in different environment. This will guarantee that policies will leave no talent behind and optimum national achievement in sports would be ensured.

Recommendations

1. There is need to sensitize the stakeholders in sports of the importance of having appropriate representation of females among sports administrators or officials for effective performance of the team.
2. It should also be noted that male-dominated sports officials/administrators could be counter-productive and efforts should be made to ensure gender equity in selecting sports officials.
3. Factors that dissuade female involvement in sports should be revisited with a view to reengineering the structures to encourage women involvement even at decision-making level.

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