

STATUS OF GENDER EQUITY IN COMPETITIVE SPORTS IN UGANDA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out whether there was gender equity in competitive sports in Uganda. A cross sectional survey was conducted whereby a total of 350 respondents from 10 sports federations in Uganda were used. The study used Board/Executive Committee members, coaches of both men and women's teams and athletes at national level. Questionnaires and a document analysis guide validated by experts by pre-testing were used for data collection. Data was coded and presented as means, frequencies, and percentages for descriptive analysis. The ANOVA test, which was carried out, $p > .05$, revealed that gender disparity existed in competitive sports in Uganda. This was established from the respondents' views that fewer women than men participate in sports. The ANOVA test results

showed no significant difference in the views of different categories of respondents, $F(2,300) = 2.009$. In addition, the independent samples t-test, at $p > .05$, showed that the numbers of male were much more than that of women participants at different levels in competitive sports in Uganda. Further, the study found out that there was a significant difference in the opportunities available for male and female participants, male ($M = 3.454$, $SD = 0.446$) and female ($M = 2.889$, $SD = 0.220$); $t(14) = 3.21$, at $p = 0.006$, with male participants being availed more opportunities than their female counterparts. The study recommended that more women should get involved in sports and opportunities should equally be availed to both women and men.

Key Words: Gender, gender equity, sports opportunities, sports.

Introduction

In many societies, it was considered inappropriate for women to engage in sports and if they did, they were perceived as 'masculine'. On the other hand, men who did not engage in sports were labelled 'unmanly' (Sever, 2005). This could have been due to the fact that society had always been patriarchal, and men tended to deny or reduce the opportunities for women in the types of sports they could participate in (Wesson et al., 2002). Njororai, Achola and Mwisukha (2003) note that women's under-representation in sports is not only reflected in their low participation as players, but also in sports leadership and spectatorship. In Britain, for example, women were hardly involved in sports before the First World War (Beashel & Taylor, 1992). Honeybourne, Hill and Moors (1996) note that much

as the women population in Britain was over 50%, it was only 10% of the women who participated in some sporting activity as compared to 33% of the men. This clearly shows the under-representation of women in sports in Britain.

Apart from the situation in Britain, the development of the Olympic Games shows another example where women were excluded from participation in sports, not only from playing, but also from spectating. For many years, since the revival of the modern Olympics Games in 1894, the leadership in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was provided by men only (Morris, 1984; Hargreaves, 1994 and Galligan et al., 2000). However, by the year 2005, the International Olympic Committee

Commissions and Working Groups began to include more women than ever before (International Olympic Committee, 2005a). The International Olympic Committee (2005b) noted that while the participation of women in physical activities and the Olympic Games had steadily increased, the percentage of women in governing bodies and administrative bodies of the Olympic Movement was still low. Similarly, the Feminist Majority Foundation (1995) reported that there were still significantly fewer women coaches and administrators than men.

During the 1990s, the International Community committed itself to address gender equality and empowerment. This was done through world summits and global conferences. For instance, the UK Sports Council (1998) quoted the Platform for Action put in place in 1995, which strongly emphasized the creation of gender-sensitivity programmes for women and girls of all ages in sports; and the promotion of full and equal participation of girls in sports. The UK Sports Council (1998) also highlighted the Windhoek Call for Action of 1998, which reaffirmed the Brighton Declaration and called for action throughout the world to further the development of equal opportunities for girls and women to participate in sport in its broadest sense.

In the case of Africa, Mazrui (1986) lamented the imbalance between male and female participation in sports. He noted that sports had been male dominated over the years. Under-representation of women in sports was highlighted as most prevalent in Africa. For instance, Njororai et al (2003) reported that Kenyan women's participation in sports was very low at national sports federations, universities and in the

contingents of officials that accompanied athletes to the World Sports Championships.

Makwasi (1995) noted that many Ugandans seemed to harbour the prejudice that men were better performers than women and therefore gave women less chances and opportunities for continued participation. Gender imbalance was seen at the national level, not only in some contingents of the country in the international competitions, but also in the composition of committees of various national sports organisations. For example, in 2007, the Uganda Olympic Committee Board had 91% male against 9% female members; Executive Committee of the National Council of Sports had 82% male and only 18% female members. In addition, the national federations comprised about 76% male membership on their executive committees (National Council of Sports, 2007). With this information, the study was interested in finding out if the situation has been the same over the years or whether there has been an improvement or decline in the balance between male and female members who are participating in sports.

It is important for both men and women in all spheres of life to participate in sports. This is due to the fact that sports has many benefits such as promoting mental and physical well-being, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases later in life (Marshall, Acton, Hubbard & Doreen, 1993; Honeybourne, Hill & Moors, 2002). It is therefore against this background that the researcher identifies the need to conduct a study on the trends towards gender equity in sports participation in Uganda.

The International Olympic Committee (2005b) emphasises that participation in sports is a human right and a valued social activity for everyone, male

and female alike. In addition, participation in sports has numerous long-term benefits, which cannot be underrated or overlooked. These include self-expression, personal achievement and good health (Beashel & Taylor, 1996; Garos, 2006). Unfortunately, there has been gender disparity because women's participation has been very low compared to that of men world over, which deprives them of the sports benefits (Mazrui, 1986; Houlihan, 2003). In the light of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International women's conferences' recommendations to improve gender balance in sports, there has been need to investigate the situation in Uganda. This study therefore aimed to find out whether there was gender disparity in participation in competitive sports in Uganda and to determine the opportunities available for both women and men's participation in these sports. These objectives led to the following hypotheses: there was no significant difference in the views of sports participation about women and men's involvement in competitive sports in Uganda; there was no significant difference in the proportion of male and female participants in competitive sports in Uganda; and there was no significant difference in the opportunities available for men and women's participation in competitive sports in Uganda.

Materials and methods

A descriptive survey research design was used in this study which enabled the researcher status of gender representation in sports participation and trends towards gender equity in sports in Uganda. The study focused on sports organisations that included the National Council of Sports, Uganda Olympic Committee, ten selected national sports

federations/associations, national coaches, and national athletes.

Stratified random sampling was used in selecting officials of the National Council of Sports and Uganda Olympic Committee, members of the National Executive Committees/Boards, the national coaches and national players of the already selected sports federations/associations. This was as per guidelines given by Haag (2004) and Oso and Onen (2005). The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that both men and women were included in the sample and were well represented (Haag, 2004). Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select the respondents and, as such, at the time of the study each member had an equal probability of being selected (Amin, 2005). The study used 92 (26.3%) officials of national sports organisations, 50 (14.3%) coaches and 208 (59.4%) athletes giving a total of 350 respondents out of a target population of 483 as obtained from the sample size calculator (Creative Research Systems, 2003).

Two sets of questionnaires (for officials and athletes) and documentary analysis were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis whereby the data obtained was presented as frequencies and percentages in tabular form and later displayed in graphs and charts. Inferential statistics of t - test and ANOVA were then used for data treatment in assessing differences between the groups (Thomas et al, 2005).

Results

The items from the questionnaires were weighed on a 5-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly

Disagree (SD). They were scored as 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for further analysis to be carried out. As to whether there were fewer women than men

participation in sports, the following results were obtained:

Table 1 Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents on Men and Women's Participation in Competitive Sports

ITEM	SCORE	RESPONSES					
		BOARD/EXECUTIVE		COACHES		ATHLETES	
		f	%	F	%	f	%
Fewer women than men participate in sports	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	3	7.3	4	2.1
	Disagree	1	1.4	2	4.9	11	5.9
	Undecided	1	1.4	1	2.4	4	2.1
	Agree	26	35.1	9	22.0	79	42.0
	Strongly Agree	45	60.8	26	63.4	90	47.9
<i>Total</i>		<i>74</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>188</i>	<i>100.0</i>

The results as shown in Table 1 indicate that majority of the Board/Executive members, that is, 26 (35.1%) agreed and 45 (60.8%) strongly agreed that fewer women than men participated in sports activities. This was similar to responses given by the coaches whereby (26, 63.4%) coaches strongly agreed and 9 (22.0%) coaches agreed. In addition, most of the athletes were of the same view whereby 90 (47.9%)

athletes strongly agreed whereas 79 (42.0%) athletes agreed.

Percentages of male and female members who participated at different levels in national sports organisations was compiled from the records of the sports federations and organisations. The results obtained for the period 1988 to 2009 are shown below:

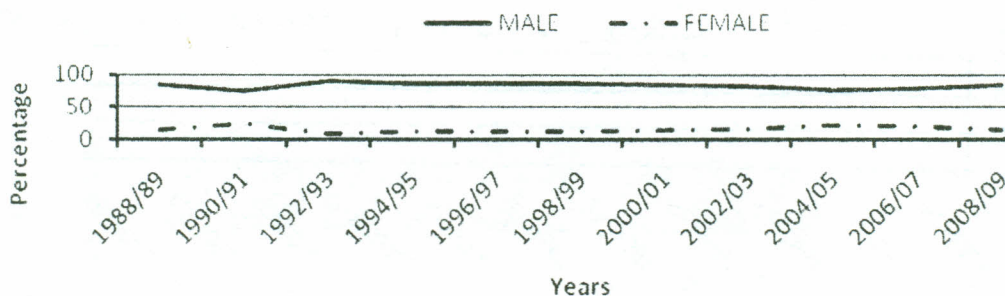


Figure 1 Proportion of Male to Female Members of the Boards/Executive Committees

In addition, the percentage of the male and female chairpersons and General Secretaries was scrutinized.

The results were compiled and presented as below:

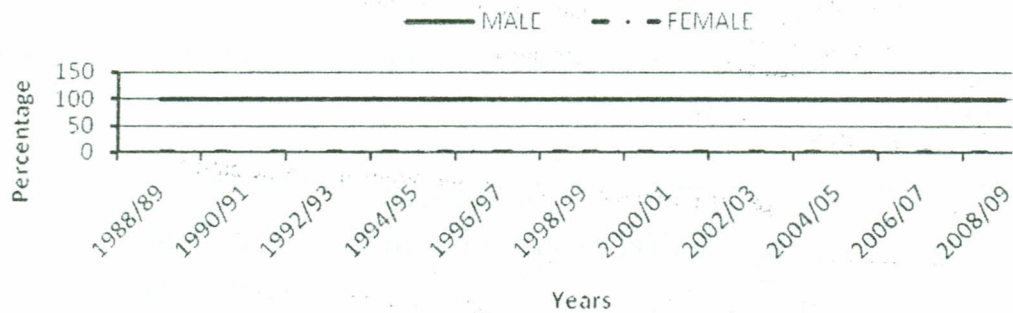


Figure 2 Proportion of Male to Female Chairpersons of Sports Associations/Federations in Uganda

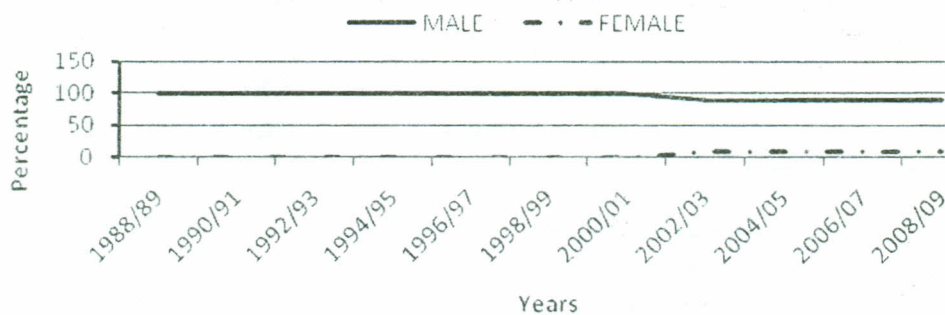


Figure 3 Proportion of Male to Female General-Secretaries of Sports Associations/Federations in Uganda

At the national level, various teams are assigned coaches and an examination of the gender by percentage showed the following results:

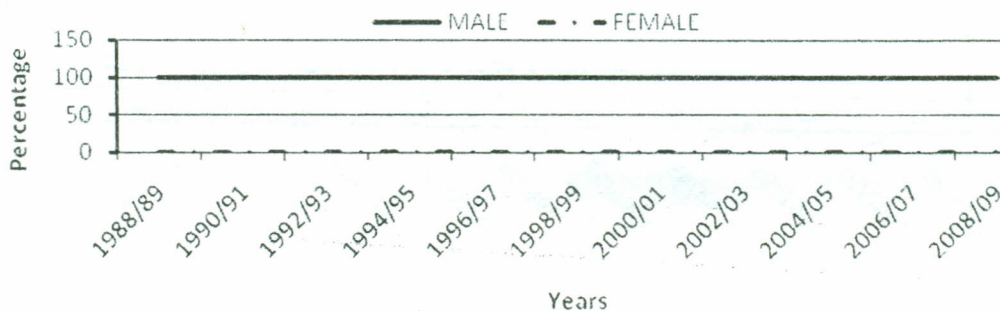


Figure 4 Gender of the Coaches for Male Teams in Competitive Sports in Uganda

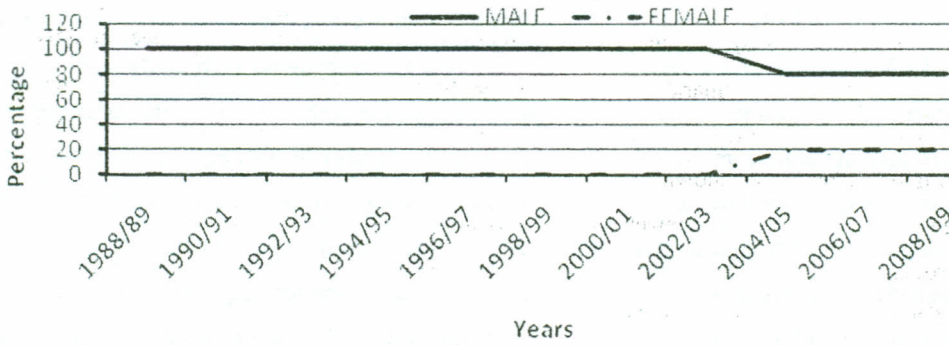


Figure 5 Gender of the Coaches for Female Teams in Competitive Sports in Uganda

The participation of athletes in various games, by gender, over the years (1997 – 2009) at national level in Uganda was summarised in Figure 6:

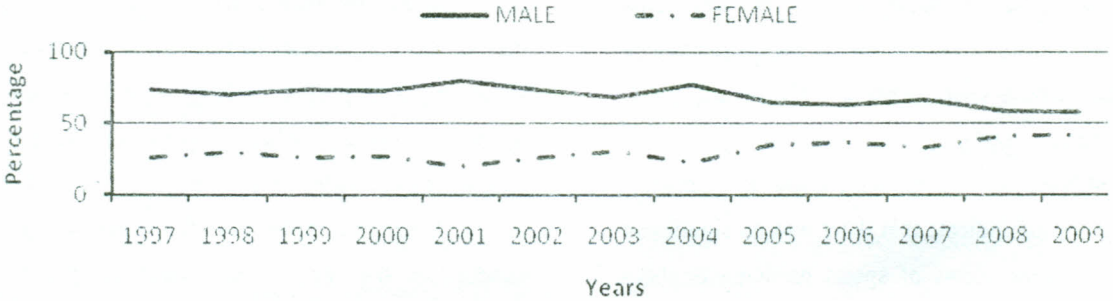


Figure 6 Ratio of Male to Female Athletes in Uganda's National-Level Sports Competitions

In order to determine the extent of gender disparity in the opportunities available for participants in sports, both male and female participants were required to

rate the different aspects of the opportunities available to them based on their perception of the situation. The responses obtained are summarised in Figure 7.

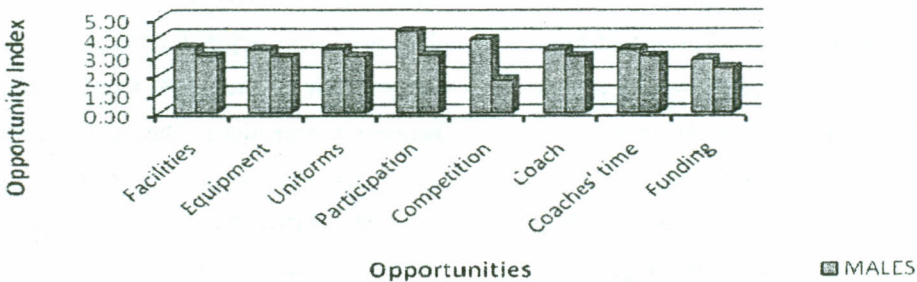


Figure 7 Opportunity indices for Male and Female Sports Participants

Discussion

The views of board members (95.9%), coaches (85.4%) and athletes (89.9%) put a remarkable emphasis on the fact that women were underrepresented in sports participation as shown by table 1. The respondents' views show that fewer women than men participate in sports and this implies there is gender disparity in competitive sports in Uganda. The results are in line with those of other studies in various places which also show that the participation of women is still low hence their underrepresentation in sports (Sport England, 2000; Houlihan, 2003; Meier, 2005; Mumford, 2005 and UNESCO, 2006). A possible explanation for this difference could be attributed to the traditional masculine values and historical male dominance embedded within sport (Ebben, 1998; Patel, 2004; Patel & Boyes, 2006).

The ANOVA test results which are $F(2,300) = 2.009$, at $p < .05$ indicate that there was no significant difference in the views of sports participants about women and men's involvement in sports, therefore, H_0 was accepted.

From the results in figure 1 above, the percentage of women in management of sports in Uganda is still very low as compared to that of men over the years. Figure 2 reveals that the Chairpersons of all the committees were male and there was no Committee which was chaired by a female. This could have been caused by the fact that women were very few on the executive committees, and that the mobility of women into managerial positions is still slow (Moore, 2008 citing Duehr & Bono, 2006). Similarly, results of the percentages on the gender of the General-Secretaries of the sports organisations in Uganda during the period 1988 to 2009 as shown in

Figure 3 indicate that they have been mainly male. These findings correspond with many studies which decry the gender imbalance in managerial positions whereby the number of women in administrative and decision making positions of sport organizations was very small and this limits the potential for meaningful reform toward gender equality from local to international level (Wesson et al., 2005; Shaw, 2006; Huggins & Randell, 2007 and United Nations, 2007).

An examination of the gender of the coaches at national level revealed that all men's teams were being coached by male coaches for the over 20-year period, and that females had male coaches until 2004 when only a proportion of 20% began to be coached by female coaches whereas 80% continued being coached by the male. This is shown in figures 4 and 5 above. A possible explanation for largely using male coaches in the teams could be attributed to the traditional masculine values and historical male dominance imbedded within sport and the perception that coaching is a masculine role (Acosta and Carpenter, 2000; West et al., 2001; McGinnis, Chun & McQuillan, 2003, Patel, 2004; Patel & Boyes, 2006; Hannan, 2008).

Results about athletes as shown in figure 6 indicate that there were approximately 3 female athletes to every 8 male athletes (37% female representation) in national competitions. During the period 1997 to 2004, the gap in gender disparity was almost constant. From 2005 onwards, however, the gap started decreasing, whereby the number of female athletes participating in national-level sports competitions increased in relation to that of male

athletes. This situation could have been due to the fact that the dominant male sport value system had defined and delimited the parameters of sport for women and girls (United Nations, 2007). Additionally, the decrease in the gap could have been as a result of the changing attitude of women towards sports. Further, these findings are in agreement with Huggins & Randell (2007) who contend that the number of female athletes lags behind that of male in all countries around the world. The implication of this is that there were more male athletes than the female counterparts.

The independent samples t-tests showed that there was a significant difference in the ratios of male to female members of the Boards/Executive Committees of sports Associations/Federations for male ($M = 83.7$, $SD = 4.9$) and female ($M = 16.3$, $SD = 4.9$); $t(20) = 32.3$, $p = .000$. In addition, there was a significant difference in the ratios of male to female members of the General Secretaries which was for male ($M = 96.4$, $SD = 5.0$) and female ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 5.0$); $t(20) = 43.1$, $p = .000$. Also, the results show a significant difference in the ratios of male and female coaches for female teams for male ($M = 94.5$, $SD = 9.3$) and female ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 9.3$); $t(20) = 22.4$, $p = .000$. Further, the results show that there was a significant difference in the ratios of male to female athletes of sports Associations/Federations for male ($M = 71.5$, $SD = 5.2$) and female ($M = 28.5$, $SD = 5.2$); $t(20) = 19.5$, $p = .000$. Hence, the null hypothesis, H_{02} , that there is no significant difference in the proportion of male and female participants in sports in Uganda over the years was rejected.

In relation to opportunities availed to athletes, Figure 7 shows that availability of the chance to take part in

competitions had the smallest index for females (1.74) whereas it had the second largest index for the male counterparts (3.88). This was followed by availability of chances to participate in sports whereby the opportunity index for men (4.28) was the biggest yet the index for women (3.01) was second smallest. For all the opportunities for sports, the opportunity index was higher for men than that for women. These results are consistent with those of other studies (Daldine, 1992; Priest and Summerfield, 1994; United Nations, 2007; Women's Sports Foundation, 2008) which indicate that sports opportunities are more availed to men than to women. The t-test results show that there was a significant difference in the opportunities available for male and female participants, male ($M = 3.454$, $SD = 0.446$) and female ($M = 2.889$, $SD = 0.220$); $t(14) = 3.21$, at $p = 0.006$ with male participants being availed more opportunities than their female counterparts. This indicates that gender disparity exists in the opportunities available. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H_{03} , that there is no significant difference in the opportunities available for male and female sports participants in Uganda was rejected.

Conclusion

There is gender disparity in sports in Uganda. This is evidenced in the views of respondents. First, the bigger ratio of men to women participants in sports both at managerial and athletes' level. Second, sports opportunities such as availability of sports' facilities, equipment, uniforms and coaches were more for male than for female participants. The availability of sports opportunities to men rather than to women was statistically significant and hence the hypothesis was rejected.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it was recommended that sensitisation campaigns, workshops and seminars on gender equity should be organised by the National Council of Sports, the Uganda Olympic Committee, sports associations/federations and the government through the Ministry of Education and Sports. In addition, sports opportunities in terms of sports facilities, equipment, allocation of coaches, structured competitions and funding need to be availed equally to men and women. Sports' federation officials and managers of sports in public and private sectors should not only shoulder the responsibility of making available equal opportunities in these aspects but also ensure that sports facilities' schedules equally cater for both men and women. Alternatively, facilities specifically for women need to be developed to enable women to access them any time they would want to use them

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