

Women Sports Participation and Gender Sensitivity Towards Enhanced Sports' Program

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Abstract: This study explores women's participation in sports and the level of gender sensitivity within sports programs. Using comprehensive methods, including reliability measurements and statistical analyses, it assesses women's exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity. Data collected from athletes at ShanTou Polytechnic provide valuable insights into participant profiles, exposure levels, and gender sensitivity awareness. Reliability measurements indicate strong internal consistency in exposure and gender sensitivity, ensuring the study's credibility. Demographic analysis reveals a higher proportion of female athletes, mainly around the age of 20, with a predominant involvement in sports dance. The study systematically addresses respondents' personal information concerning gender, age, and sports types. It delves into women's exposure in sports, focusing on public interest, participation, representation, and frequency of sports involvement. Findings indicate a high level of support, encouragement, and recognition for female athletes within the sports community. The study also explores respondents' awareness of gender sensitivity faced by female athletes, emphasizing mutual encouragement, equal treatment, and rejecting gender stereotypes. In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of women's sports participation and gender sensitivity, offering valuable insights for enhancing inclusivity and support for women in sports. It underscores the significance of promoting equal opportunities, breaking stereotypes, and ensuring a conducive environment for the health and recognition of female athletes.

Keywords: Women's Sports Participation; Gender Sensitivity; Exposure and Awareness; Equality Challenges.

1. Introduction

Sport is buried in gender stereotypes, with disparaging phrases such as throwing a ball "like a girl" or the need for the team to "man up" still exist within the 21st century conversation. The gender barriers present in sport started as obstacles of opportunity, yet man barriers remain (Mateo-Orcajada, Abenza-Cano.2021). For example, the rise of women's participation in sport has caused the creation of one women-only leagues and less coeducational sports opportunities for gendered unity. In a similar law of unintended consequences, the rise of women's sport media offerings has come at a time of increased media channels as a whole, making women's sport less likely to be on mainstream sports channels like ESPN and more likely to be on harder-to-find sports channels such as NBC Sports Network. Discussion of women in sport are different than those about gender issues in sport. The former is about the struggle for participation, opportunity, and equal treatment for one identify group, while the latter is about the power-laden interaction between this this identity group and those who currently have the access and opportunities, men.

Thus, in this paper, the focus will be on gender issues faced by Chinese women athletes through the sports they played there in China. The paper aims to assess the amount of current coverage and exposure accorded to women and identifying current opportunities and struggles for women in modern sporting society, like China. The result of the study will be the basis for better sporting program for women.

2. Background of the Study

Research on historical background: (Li Xinnan, Zhang Donghui, et al.2023) The history of sports in China has been dominated by men, especially in the early 20th century, women's sports activities were regarded as inappropriate, so

women's participation was very limited. In the second half of the 20th century, especially with the reform and opening-up policy, the Chinese government began to actively encourage women to participate in sports activities in order to improve women's physical fitness and health. (Ni Shasha 2018) studied female athletes involved in endurance sports, which lead to iron loss from the body due to cyclic menstruation, which in turn affects the body's endurance sports function. In terms of policy support: (Shuo Zhang 2023) (Li Ming 2018) The Chinese government has introduced a series of policies to promote women's participation in sports, such as the National Fitness Plan and the National Fitness Outline, which emphasize gender equality and women's rights and interests in sports. (Wang An and Li Ningning 2021) By collating the literature, it is concluded that the government also encourages schools to provide equal opportunities for physical education to ensure that both female and male students can participate in various sports programs. Status of Participation. To summarize, the participation of women's sports in China is gradually increasing, female athletes have made remarkable achievements in various fields, and social perceptions are gradually evolving (Liu Xu 2019) (Ma Jingzhan 2018). However, continued efforts are still needed to ensure that gender equality is fully realized in sports (Gao B H. 2019), including addressing gender disparity and gender discrimination, as well as encouraging more women to participate in various sports activities.

3. Statement of the Problem

Women athletes in China face various gender issues within the sports they play, including unequal coverage and exposure compared to men. This paper aims to assess the current coverage and exposure of women in sports and identify the opportunities and struggles they face in modern Chinese sporting society. The study seeks to answer the following

questions:

What is the profile of respondents in terms of sex, age, and sports type?

What is the level of exposure accorded to women in sports in terms of public interest, participation, representation, and frequency of sports?

What is the extent of respondents' awareness of gender sensitivity faced by women athletes in terms of tolerance, accommodation, and involvement?

Are there significant differences between the levels of exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity among women athletes when grouped based on demographic factors?

Is there a significant relationship between the level of exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity among women athletes?

What are the gender issues faced by women athletes in the sports they play?

What inputs can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

The hypotheses to be tested are:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the level of exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity among women athletes.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the level of exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity among women athletes.

4. Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study focuses on women athletes aged 18 to 22 at ShanTou Polytechnic in China, particularly those majoring in university cheerleading, yoga, aerobics, and artistic gymnastics. These fields are female-dominated, with a high proportion of female participation. The study aims to investigate gender issues faced by these women athletes, including gender stereotypes, exposure and opportunity disparities, gender equality issues, social perceptions, and competitive and performance balance.

The study is delimited to female athletes in the aforementioned age group and majors at ShanTou Polytechnic. It does not include male athletes or those outside the specified age range or majors. Additionally, the study does not encompass a broader range of sports or institutions beyond ShanTou Polytechnic. The research focuses solely on the gender issues faced by female athletes in the specified context.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Design

This study will employ a non-experimental quantitative design, specifically using a descriptive research design and cross-sectional assessments. The descriptive research design will describe and interpret the current status of women athletes at ShanTou Polytechnic in terms of the amount of current coverage and exposure accorded to women, as well as identifying current opportunities and struggles for women in modern sporting society, like China. The cross-sectional survey will examine possible differences in characteristics among women athletes engaged in sports like yoga, cheerleading, line dance, sports dance, and other sports, all of which are popular among female students at ShanTou Polytechnic.

5.1.1. Sampling Method

The participants in this study will be women athletes at ShanTou Polytechnic engaged in the specified sports. The sampling technique will involve selecting participants based on their age and sports involvement. The inclusion criteria include women engaged in sports such as yoga, cheerleading, line dance, sports dance, and other sports, ensuring a diverse representation of women athletes at the university.

5.1.2. Research Instrument (Validation)

A self-made questionnaire will be constructed to assess the amount of current coverage and exposure accorded to women and to identify current opportunities and struggles for women in modern sporting society, like China. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a panel of experts in education and the specialized field will evaluate it. Pilot testing will also be conducted prior to data collection to refine the questionnaire and ensure its effectiveness in gathering relevant information.

5.2. Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to conducting the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the ethical board. The researcher sought validation of experts to review the survey questionnaire to ensure its effectiveness and validity.

The participants were selected based on the criteria for the study, and a rapport was established with them. Consent forms were obtained from the participants, adhering to all ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. Participants were briefed on the rationale of the study and the procedures involved, including an introduction to the questionnaires.

5.2.1. Statistical Treatment

In analyzing the data, the following statistical treatments were used at the 0.05 level of significance using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software:

1. Frequency Count and Percentage: Used to analyze the profile of the respondents.
2. Weighted Mean: Used to give different weights to individual values as indicated in the demographics of the participants.
3. T-test / ANOVA: Used to determine significant differences in member respondents based on their profiles.
4. Pearson's r Correlation Analysis: Used to determine significant relationships among variables.

5.2.2. Decision Criteria

The analysis of the hypotheses was carried out using the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was accepted when the computed significance value was greater than the set value at 0.05. Otherwise, it was rejected.

6. The Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the participants in the study. A total of 201 participants were included, with 110 (55%) females and 91 (45%) males. The age distribution of the participants is as follows: 27% are 18 years old, 24% are 19 years old, 33% are 20 years old, and 15% are 21 years old and above.

In terms of sports type, the participants were involved in various sports, including cheerleading (9%), line dance (20%), other sports (9%), sports dance (32%), and yoga (29%).

Overall, the participants represent a diverse group in terms of gender, age, and sports type, providing a comprehensive overview of women athletes in ShanTou Polytechnic.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Demographic Profile

Sex	Counts	% of Total
Female	110	55%
Male	91	45 %
Age	Counts	% of Total
18	55	27%
19	48	24 %
20	67	33 %
over 21	31	15%
Sports Type	Counts	% of Total
Cheerleading	19	9%
Line dance	40	20 %
Sports dance	64	32%
Yoga	59	29%
Other sport	19	9%

7. Conclusion

This study explored the dynamic of women's participation in sports and the level of gender sensitivity within sports programs at ShanTou Polytechnic. (Lebrun 2014) The research employed a non-experimental quantitative design, utilizing descriptive research design and cross-sectional assessments to gather and analyze data. The study focused on assessing the amount of current coverage and exposure accorded to women and identifying current opportunities and struggles for women in modern sporting society, like China.

The findings of the study revealed several key points:

Reliability Analysis: The measurement scales utilized in the study demonstrated high internal consistency, ensuring the reliability of the data.

Normality Test: The data did not follow a normal distribution, justifying the use of non-parametric tests for further analysis.

Demographic Profile: The majority of participants were female athletes, with a significant engagement in sports dancing, providing valuable context for the study.

Exposure Accorded to Women in Sports: There were no significant differences in exposure across age groups and sports types, indicating consistent attention to women athletes at ShanTou Polytechnic.

Awareness on Gender Sensitivity: Participants exhibited a generally high level of awareness, emphasizing patience, equal treatment, and a commitment to diversity and self-expression, regardless of their sex, age, or sports type.

Relationship Between Exposure and Awareness: There was a significant and positive relationship between exposure and awareness of gender sensitivity, suggesting that increased exposure leads to heightened awareness, and vice versa.

Gender Issues Faced by Women Athletes: The study identified various challenges faced by women athletes, including physical discrimination, gender harassment, and social discrimination, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to address gender inequalities in sports.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing knowledge on gender issues in sports and lays the foundation for future research and interventions aimed at fostering

gender equity and inclusivity in the world of sports. The findings underscore the importance of implementing policies for equal opportunity, advocating for gender-responsive regulations, and promoting gender sensitivity training and media literacy programs. By addressing these issues, sports organizations and decision-makers can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for female athletes, ultimately enhancing the overall quality and success of sports programs at ShanTou Polytechnic and beyond.

8. Recommendations

To enhance women's sports participation and gender sensitivity in sports programs, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, implementing equal opportunity policies is crucial to ensure fair treatment and opportunities for female athletes. Secondly, establishing gender-responsive regulations can promote a fair competitive environment. Additionally, advocating for equal compensation and sponsorship opportunities for female athletes is essential. In terms of educational initiatives, incorporating gender sensitivity training into sports education curricula and promoting media literacy programs to combat gender stereotypes in sports coverage are recommended. Institutional support should focus on ensuring fair distribution of resources and support for women's sports, along with establishing career development plans for female athletes post-retirement. Cultivating an inclusive sports culture involves increasing visibility and media coverage of women's sports events and encouraging diversity in sports leadership positions. Further research is needed to explore the impact of cultural backgrounds on women's sports participation and investigate other factors influencing exposure to women's sports. These recommendations aim to address gender issues, promote inclusivity, and advance gender equality in sports programs, ultimately creating a more supportive and equal environment for female athletes.

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