

Determinants of Women Under-Representation in Sports at the University-The Case of Kenyan Universities

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ABSTRACT

Under-representation of women in socio-economic activity in Kenya continues to raise eye brows. At University sports, while the world stage seems to have resolved this issue; in Kenya it still seems to be a major problem. The purpose of this study was to look at the determinants of under-representation of women in sports at Kenyan Universities. Sports departments in Kenya suggest that they offer the same opportunities for men and woman to participate in sports. So what are the factors that affect the disparity found in participation of women in sports at the university? This paper was an attempt to look at those factors that affect women participation in sports. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The study targets all 55 Universities in Kenya which had approximately 10,000 students involved in sports. Out of this, 300 students were purposively selected for this study. A questionnaire was used to seek for information from these students. The results indicate that there was a significant difference between males and female participation in different sports at the university. This was attributed to a number of factors. These factors included motivation, state of personnel that work in sports departments, facilities, and equipment.

Keywords: *University sports, Gender, Participation, Criteria for selection, Personnel.*

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Highlights of this paper

- Tradition is still a key determinant in sports participation for women in Kenya.
- Women are under-represented both at the social-economic and sports level in Kenya.
- Private universities have better sports infrastructure than public universities in Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports is defined as all forms of physical activity which through casual or organized participation aims at encouraging, expressing and improving physical fitness and mental wellness of a human being. It encourages social relationships or obtains results in competitions at all levels (Council of Europe, 2011) Sport is one of the most essential things for everyone including for women at the college level (Sturts, 2013). There are many positive outcomes associated with sporting activities (Nxumalo and Beetge, 2017). These can be enjoyed by both men and women. There are many benefits of sports that may help in lives of individuals and bring forward positive outcomes (Dalgarn, 2001). Globally sports are seen to be dominated by men and there are many men in sports compared to women, be it individual or team sports (The LA Foundation 84, 2012). Sport has been seen to be more masculine than feminine (Senne, 2016). Women can be empowered by providing them chances to participate in sports; the involvement in sports is helpful in polishing and enhancing the women's skills (United Nations, 2007). In the recent years women's participation in management and administration in all spheres is being advocated (Onsongo, 2007).

Hanson (2012) in a study noted that men are seen to dominate more in the world of sports compared to women. In terms of media coverage, men's sporting activities tend to receive more coverage compared to women sporting activities. However a study conducted by Eboh (1999) revealed that female students were given both moral and material support that was offered by institutions of higher learning to promote female sports participation.

Scholars have continued to carry out studies that have examined factors that influence participation of women in sports at institution of higher learning. The studies have revealed that some of the barriers included religion, traditional and custom practices especially in African countries (Orunaboka and Nathan, 2007).

Buccholz (1993) in his study noted that in 776BC during the first Olympic games held in Greece, women were not allowed to participate, not even as spectators. They appeared in 1900 Olympics after many years.

1.1. Objectives

This study sought to find out if both male and female are given the same opportunity to participate in sports at institutions of higher learning in Kenya. Further the study set out to establish the factors that pose as obstacles for Kenyan university level sportswomen in sports participation.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research used a descriptive survey design. Sampling was purposive; respondents were sportsmen and sportswomen of Kenyan universities. Questionnaires and interview schedules were also used to collect data. Interviews were held using a one on one session to get the responses. This study targeted students and sports personnel involved in sports at the university. Universities in Kenya are categorized either as public or private. About 5% of the students who enroll in universities participate in either scholastic or interscholastic sports translating to a target population of 10,000 (Munayi, 2014). The body mandated nationally to run sports is the Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA). For ease of operations and logistics KUSA has divided all universities in Kenya into six conferences. Three conferences were purposively sampled namely; Nairobi conference, Western conference and KUSA central. A further fifty percent from each gender were sampled. This translated to 300 students. Out of the three hundred, 268 students filled their questionnaires. The study also involved personnel

who work in sports directorates and departments, these personnel were designated directors, chairmen, games tutors and sports coaches. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as tools for data collection. The researcher personally delivered questionnaire to the respondents and waited for them to be filled. Comparison of means was done. A t-test resulting in a computed t-statistics for hypothesis testing based on gender and university category was done.

2.1. Variables

The variables used in this study included:

- Motivation and benefits.
- Facilities and equipment.
- Personnel.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

a) Respondents

The researcher went out to find the distribution of sportsmen and women involved in sports at Kenyan universities. The distribution by gender of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table-1. Distribution of respondents by gender.

Gender	Students		Coaches and Sports Tutors	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	123	46%	26	93%
Female	145	54%	2	7%
Total	268	100%	28	100%

Source: Public and private universities in Kenya.

From Table 1, more female participated in the study compared to the male participants. Up to 46% were male while 56% were female this suggests that the study had a slightly higher representation of female participants. When compared to other studies, the study therefore suggests that the number of female participating in sports at the Kenyan universities is growing and females are showing a positive trend towards sports compared to other studies that show low representation of female that take part in sports (Hanson, 2012). At the University different students are involved with specific sports. In most cases the students tend to major in one sport, hence they are referred to as rugby players or netball players as the situation may be. The study went out to find what the breakdown of sportsmen and women was at Kenyan universities; Table 2 shows the current situation.

Table-2. A Presentation of Different Ball Games participated by male and female respondents

Category	Total Sample		Males (%)	Females (%)	T-statistic and p-value or Pr(T > t)
	Frequency	Percentage			
Soccer	63	24	32.23	16.67	2.9519** (0.0017)
Rugby	29	11	19.01	4.17	3.9180** (0.0001)
Netball	34	13	0.83	22.92	-5.6740** (0.0001)
Volleyball	64	24	21.49	26.39	-0.9679 (0.1670)
Basket ball	27	10	6.61	13.19	-1.7927* (0.0371)
Handball	47	17	19.83	15.97	0.7810 (0.2178)
Missing response	4	1	-	-	-
Total	268	100	100	100	-

Notes:

The T-statistic is computed from the mean value of males being significantly greater than that of females;

Hypothesis testing significance p-values are recorded in parentheses;

The asterisk “**” denotes that the statistic attains significance at 1% level of testing while “*” denotes that the statistic attains significance at 5% level of testing. In other words, this is the probability that the calculated statistic is greater than the critical statistic at the corresponding degrees of freedom.

The findings indicated that 24% of the students of the respondents who participated in the study preferred soccer, up to 32% were male while only 16% were female. The study also showed that there was more male participating in rugby compared to their female counterparts. The study also showed that the only sport dominated by the female was netball a sport traditionally perceived to be a female sport. This study concludes that most ball games in Kenya are highly dominated by the males as compared to the females. The study agrees with a study conducted by Fisher *et al.* (2003) who in their study concluded that religion continues to inhibit the female gender from participating in sports in the Arab world.

b) *Motivation*

There are many reasons for participation in sports at the university. The respondents were asked why they believed that women participated in sports at the university. The answers they gave are captured in Figure 1.

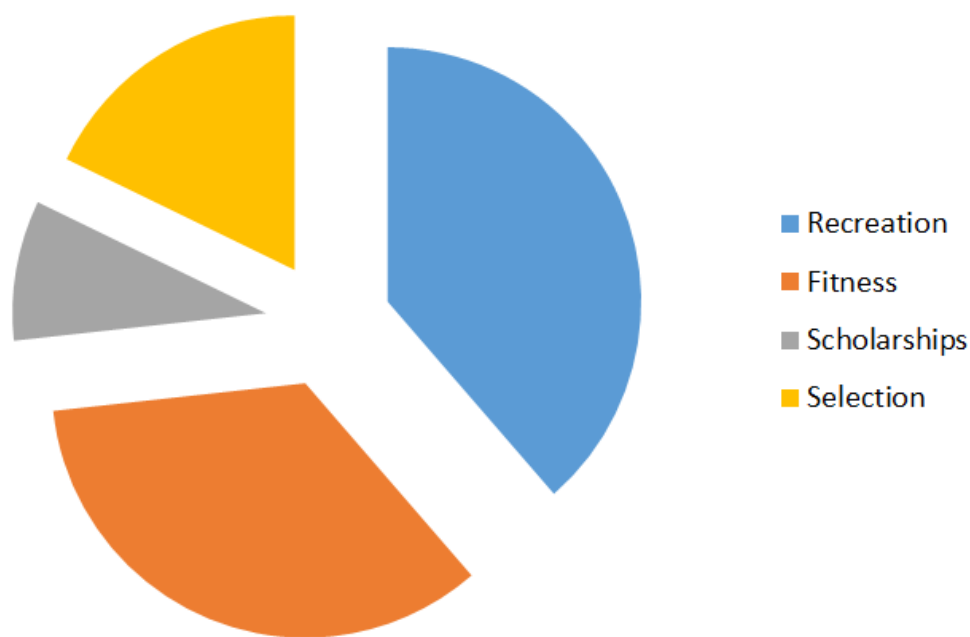


Figure-1. Reasons for participation in sports.
Source: Public and Private university sports students in Kenya.

Reasons as to why the women participated in sports differed, 105 out of 268 (39%) said they believed women participated in sports for fitness, 35% for recreation, 9% for scholarships and while 17% said they participated in sports for selection to the university teams. These tallies with Nxumalo and Beetge (2017) findings that established fitness and earnings as some of the reasons women in South Africa participated in sports.

The world university sports has a structure where sports is played at intramural level, followed by national level, the higher level is Eastern Africa Games (EAUG), a more higher level is the continental games organized by the Federation of African sports union (FASU) and finally at the world stage games which is organized by Federation international sports union (FASU) the world university Games. Figure 2 shows the motivation for competition amongst the students.

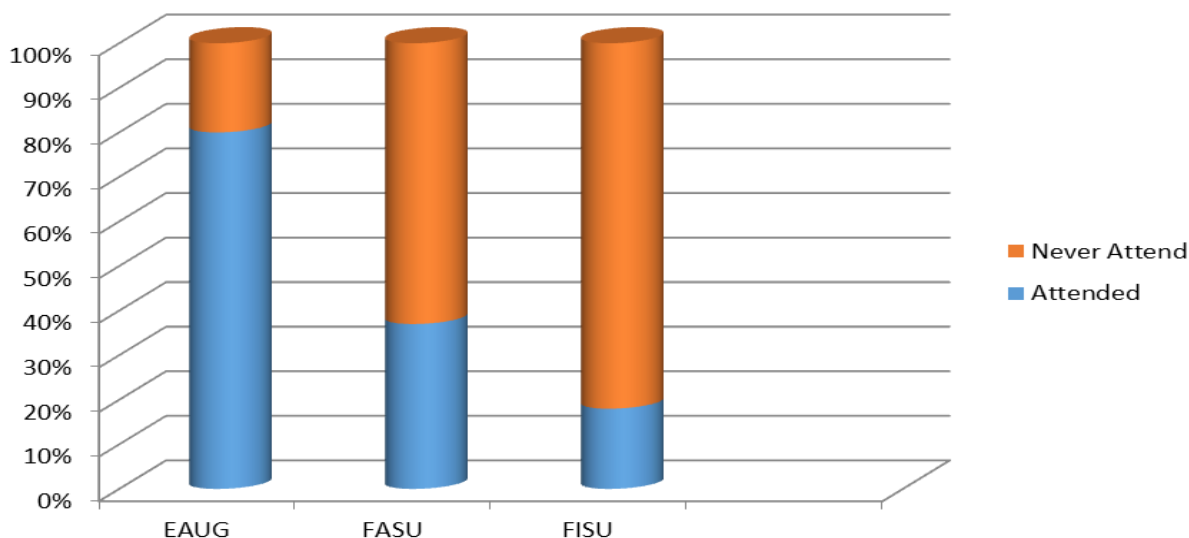


Figure-2. Attendance of external games.

Source: Public and Private university sports students in Kenya.

The sports men and women felt that the women only participate in competitive sports up to East African University Sports (EAUG) competitions, 88% participated in these competitions, when it came to Federation of African University Sports (FASU) level competitions, only 37% participated, and finally in the sports organized by the Federation of World University Sports (FISU) only 18% participated. This they felt was not a motivational factor for them.

c) Facilities and Equipment

Facilities and equipment play a major role in the actualization of sports performance. The availability of quality of facilities and equipment are significant for women top level participation. The study went out to discover the situation on the ground at universities spread all over Kenya. Table 3 captured that data.

Table-3. State of university facility and equipment.

University infrastructure and personnel	Yesn (%)	Private Universities	Public Universities	χ Statistic(1 d.f)
The quality of our fields are in good condition	141(52.61)	69%	44%	10.27**
The number of fields provided are enough for sports men and women in my university	148 (55.22)	70%	47%	8.62**
There is enough equipment for all sports men and women in my university	133 (49.63)	61%	42%	5.65*
My team is well kitted for competitions	161 (60.07)	70%	53%	4.84*
My team has qualified trained coach	191 (71.27)	82%	67%	4.74*
My coach is present for training	180 (67.16)	84%	58%	12.48**
My team can access the training facility anytime they want to train	161 (60.07)	72%	54%	5.72*
My facility is always in bad condition and not safe for training	69 (25.75)	25%	31%	0.79

Source: Public and Private university sports students in Kenya.

1) The Chi-square statistic is computed to establish relationship between “Yes/No” responses on elements of infrastructure and personnel and category of university of respondent

Most sports men and women stated that facility for training were not up to standard at the Kenyan universities scenario, 44% noted that the quality of fields were in good condition for training. 47% suggested that the number of

fields provided for training were enough for sportswomen 42% said that there was enough equipment in the Kenyan universities. 53% noted that their teams were well kitted for sports competition and 54% noted that they can access their fields for training and recreational sports any time they wanted to train

d) *Personnel and Infrastructure of Sports*

Table 4 below shows a very low number of female personnel representations at both public and private universities. Only 7% (2) of personnel working as directors, chairmen, coaches and sports tutors are female, while 93% (26) were of the male gender. Only two females out of the ten sampled were heads of department in Kenyan universities. This suggests that the male gender still dominates in management of sports in the Kenyan Universities. The study therefore concluded that gender is a factor affecting participation of women in sports at the universities. The women noted that priority was given to male sports. Soccer, rugby, handball, basketball were dominated by men yet they are played by both genders. Netball is still a female sport with majority of the universities having only women play and no male netball teams. There was low recognition of women in sports.

Table-4. Quality of infrastructure and personnel in public and private universities in Kenya.

University infrastructure and personnel	Yesn (%)	Private Universities	Public Universities	χ Statistic(1 d.f)
The quality of our fields are in good condition	141(52.61)	69%	44%	10.27**
The number of fields provided are enough for sports men and women in my university	148 (55.22)	70%	47%	8.62**
There is enough equipment for all sports men and women in my university	133 (49.63)	61%	42%	5.65*
My team is well kitted for competitions	161 (60.07)	70%	53%	4.84*
My team has qualified trained coach	191 (71.27)	82%	67%	4.74*
My coach is present for training	180 (67.16)	84%	58%	12.48**
My team can access the training facility anytime they want to train	161 (60.07)	72%	54%	5.72*
My facility is always in bad condition and not safe for training	69 (25.75)	25%	31%	0.79

Source: Public and Private university sports students in Kenya.

- 2) *The Chi-square statistic is computed to establish relationship between “Yes/No” responses on elements of infrastructure and personnel and category of university of respondent;*
- 3) *The asterisk “**” denotes that the statistic attains significance at 1% level of testing while “*” denotes that the statistic attains significance at 5% level of testing.*

The study revealed that there was better infrastructure in private universities compared to our public universities. In generally 52% of the respondents felt that the fields were in good condition, however a higher proportion from public universities (69% versus 44%) reported that their fields were in good condition which was confirmed by chi-square statistics at one degree of freedom. The numbers of fields provided seem to be better in private universities than public universities. 70% of students from private universities agree that the number of fields provide was sufficient compared to 47% of students from public universities. This means that our public universities that have a higher intake of student seem to be doing poorly in terms of fields. This could be the determinant that hinders women participation in sports at the university. In terms of equipment the trend seems to carry on, 61% of sports students in private universities agree that there is enough equipment while 42% from public universities agree on the same. When it came to kitting of university teams, 70% of students from public universities agree that they are well kitted while 53% from public universities agreed on the same. Personnel, facility and maintenance of facility as the key determinant that affects women participation, private universities look

better compared to public universities. This reveals that the quality of fields, personnel and equipment is not sufficient in the Kenyan public universities. This study agrees with a study done by Awoma *et al.* (2015) who in their study concluded that facility and equipment is key to participation of sports at the university.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be appreciation of girls and women in sports, providing motivation to the female gender in sports. This can help to eliminate or decrease the discriminatory practices
- Need to design sports courses which would be implemented in the educational institutions for providing knowledge to girls at a young age
- Female coaches and trainers should be hired for all girl and women teams. This will create a separate platform for women's sports participation
- Media should include participation of women in sports in news as a normal concept and the gender discrimination should be eliminated

5. CONCLUSIONS

- The two-thirds gender rule embedded in the Kenya Constitution 2010 should be enforced in constituting sports management at the university level to enhance female representation.
- Men are still seen to be dominating in the field of sports in Kenya. This could be the reason as to why the Kenya national team is underrepresented at international competitions. The study discovered that it is the socio-cultural norms and practices like family values that make sports to be looked at as an arena for men and gives women lack of opportunity and lack of platform to showcase their talents in sports. Women must face the stereotypical gender based discrimination which creates hurdles in their meaningful and active sports participation.

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