"A meta-analysis of women professional evolution in sports leadership"

| AUTHORS | Chaymaa Lotfy (iD) Ⓡ
Yasmina Bennis Bennani (iD) Ⓡ
Annie Cornet (iD) Ⓡ |

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
37	7	3

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

Chaymaa Lotfy, Ph.D. Student, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Hassan II University, Morocco. (Corresponding author)

Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Ph.D., Professor, Faculty of Legal, Economic and Social Sciences, Hassan II University, Morocco.

Annie Cornet, Ph.D., Full Professor, Hec-Liège [University of Liège], Belgium.

Chaymaa Lotfy (Morocco), Yasmina Bennis Bennani (Morocco), Annie Cornet (Belgium)

A META-ANALYSIS OF WOMEN PROFESSIONAL EVOLUTION IN SPORTS LEADERSHIP

Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in sports leadership positions raises significant concerns regarding equality and diversity. This study aims to explore the relationship between sports leadership and gender. The objective is to understand and highlight the individual, organizational, and societal factors hindering women's progress in sports leadership roles. This paper identified 32 publications out of 157 selected references through the systematic literature review (SLR) method. The results of this meta-analysis reveal that despite their active involvement in sports, women remain inadequately represented in leadership roles. In fact, women face several challenges, including sexism, underestimation of their skills, and associating them with family constraints. Consequently, it becomes imperative to take concrete measures to promote gender equality and an equal professional development environment for both genders. Several areas for future studies could deepen the understanding of sports leadership and gender, including cross-linguistic comparisons, intersectional perspectives, longitudinal analyses, a study of male dynamics, technological impact, the evaluation of organizational policies and practices, as well as cultural comparisons.

INTRODUCTION

The professional evolution of women in sports leadership is a topic of undeniable relevance and significant current importance. Within the governing bodies of sports, the diversity and representation of women in positions of responsibility have a considerable social and economic impact. Increased participation of women in key leadership roles offers many benefits, both organizationally and culturally, as well as collectively, as highlighted by LaVoi (2016). Fostering a more diverse leadership environment can lead to improved decision-making and enhanced performance within sports organizations.

However, despite the potential advantages, women continue to be underrepresented in positions of responsibility within the sports world. This underrepresentation can be attributed to various obstacles, whether they are individual in nature (attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of women and various stakeholders), organizational (recruitment and promotion practices within sports organizations, sport-specific characteristics), or societal (the status of women in society, the degree of gender diversity in sports participation, etc.). These factors have created a glass ceiling that limits opportunities for women to access and advance professionally into leadership roles in the sports domain. Despite the efforts of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to break this glass ceiling, women remain nearly absent from sports leadership positions. At the same time, men continue to dominate the highest-ranking positions in the sports movement.

Furthermore, while the scientific literature extensively addresses gender inequalities, few studies have examined the connection between female representation and their access to decision-making positions within sports institutions. This lack of research poses a significant issue in assessing progress in gender equality at the pinnacle of the sports hierarchy. There is a need to explore the most significant research on the professional evolution of women in sports leadership and the research methodologies applied in the sports field. It is vital to consolidate knowledge, identify trends, key factors, and obstacles influencing women's professional advancement into positions of responsibility in the sports domain.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The question of female leadership in sports brings forth an array of complex and diversified challenges. Research in this field spans various countries and sports disciplines, highlighting the structural and systemic barriers that hinder women's access to leadership roles and demonstrating its persistence despite efforts (Pape, 2020; Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013; Adriaanse & Schofield, 2014; Ahn & Cunningham, 2020; Aman et al., 2019; Cosentino et al., 2021; Culver et al., 2019; Martel, 2007; Mazerolle et al., 2015; Walker & Bopp, 2011). These findings align with the context of the "glass ceiling," a concept established in the 1980s to raise awareness about women's challenges in leadership positions. While the "glass ceiling" describes an invisible limit within the hierarchy, scholars have transitioned to the "glass labyrinth" concept to represent the complexity of obstacles that women encounter in reaching high-level positions. This shift in perspective encourages overcoming these obstacles and understanding that challenges permeate all levels of the organization, underscoring the importance of informed decision-making to promote gender equality (Northouse, 2018; Femmes et Sport au Canada et E-Alliance, 2021; Eagly & Carli, 2007a, 2007b).

The explanations regarding the evolution of women's careers in the sports domain stem from a multitude of factors. Among these individual factors, gender and conventional expectations specific to these roles influence their presence in decision-making positions. Despite their demonstrated high levels of education, women remain underrepresented, which restricts their prospects for advancement (Allia, 2005; Organista, 2021). Sports education plays a central role in acquiring the skills necessary for leadership (Goetz, 2003; iKNOW Politics, 2010; UNESCO, 2006). Simultaneously, obstacles such as familial support, gender stereotypes, and motherhood hinder their professional progression, as does underrepresentation in professional networks (Vilo et al., 2022; M'mbaha & Chepyator-Thomson, 2016). Promoting gender equality and valuing women's contributions at every stage of their professional lives are crucial.

Organizational factors, encompassing the type of sports institution, policies, organizational practices, as well as the structure and culture of the organization, also hold significant sway. The goals of sports organizations, ranging from economic to societal objectives, are varied. Nevertheless, sports federations strive to regulate and promote their sport nationally and internationally. Human resource management (HRM) practices vary based on organizational goals, culture, and policies. To promote gender equality, practices like diversified recruitment policies, mentorship programs for women, and measures to ensure their equitable participation in decision-making processes are adopted. However, obstacles remain due to detrimental HRM practices, such as biased recruitment and promotions, creating a glass ceiling. Organizational culture and gender-based divisions further reinforce the underrepresentation of women. Challenges like harsh working conditions, exclusively male networks, and the lack of career development also confront women in sports decision-making (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Coenen-Huther, 2010; Harrison et al., 2009). Female role models, institutional support, and laws favoring women's promotion are crucial in combating inequalities and promoting gender equality in sports (Cosentino et al., 2021).

Moreover, a myriad of societal, political, historical, economic, sociocultural, technological, ecological, and legal factors, represented in the PHESTEL model (Kamdem et al., 2021), influence women's presence in sports leadership positions (Fagenson,

1990). The political context (P) encompasses the impact of the political framework on programs, practices, and policies implemented by entities, especially concerning gender equality and female representation in leadership roles. Governments play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality in sports by allocating funds and resources to support initiatives fostering female leadership. While some countries have established strict laws and policies to counter discrimination and promote balanced gender representation in sports governing bodies, others may lack political commitment, leaving sports organizations responsible for implementing their initiatives (Leglise, 2017). Various measures have been taken in Africa to encourage gender equality in sports and stimulate female participation in leadership roles (Ngoyi, 2015). However, political contexts also influence the perception of women as sports leaders, with significant disparities from one country to another. While some nations consider women fully competent to hold leadership positions in sports, others may grapple with gender stereotypes and biases that limit opportunities within sports organizations.

Furthermore, history (H) has played a crucial role in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within sports organizations. Historically, men dominated sports, excluding women from both competitions and decision-making roles. Nevertheless, certain women defied these constraints, with Kallipáteira's participation in the ancient Olympic Games as an example. Over time, feminist movements contributed to a better recognition of female athletes and their gradual integration into the sports world. Significant strides were made by emphasizing girls' education, with Morocco serving as an example where considerable efforts have been invested to reduce gender disparities and thus encourage female participation in sports. However, challenges persist, largely due to gender stereotypes perpetuating inequality in the sports domain. Women encounter biases and unequal access to resources and opportunities, constraining their progression toward leadership positions.

Concurrently, a country's economic context (E) is crucial in establishing equal opportunities and fostering the advancement of women into leader-

ship positions within the sports domain. In developing countries, women may face various challenges, including a lack of sports infrastructure, insufficient investment, absence of specific training programs, and gender economic inequalities limiting their access to financial resources and economic opportunities. The lack of financial support is a major obstacle, as costs associated with sports participation can be prohibitive for women. Moreover, restricted access to quality sports facilities limits their participation in sports. Funding disparities also translate to limited professional opportunities for women in the sports domain, with lower wages and fewer options for leadership positions. In Morocco, for instance, gender equality in sports is seen as an economic growth catalyst. Increased integration of women into leadership positions can positively impact the country's financial performance (Desvaux et al., 2007). However, despite observed progress, current figures indicate further improvements are necessary to achieve true equality.

The sociocultural dimension (S) is critical in establishing equitable and inclusive environments within sports organizations. Women face social obstacles and discriminatory mindsets within these entities, necessitating awareness of gender stereotypes, discriminatory behaviors, and societal norms that influence attitudes toward female leaders. The effects of technology (T) are diverse in both women's and men's sports, potentially influencing the promotion of women into leadership positions either positively or negatively. This dimension offers numerous advantages to women aspiring to advance in their sports careers. It enables them to access relevant information for their professional development equitably through websites, online training platforms, social networks, and mobile applications, increase their visibility as sports leaders by using social media to promote their achievements and successes and facilitate connections with other female leaders through professional social networking platforms. However, it is essential to note that technology can also reinforce existing gender biases in sports by exposing women to online cyberbullying and discrimination that can impact their motivation and self-confidence. Additionally, gender stereotypes can contribute to maintaining their underrepresentation in technical leadership roles. While

technology is not a complete solution to gender inequalities in sports, it can provide opportunities and means for women to thrive and progress as sports leaders. It allows for better accessibility to information, increases their visibility, facilitates networking, and enhances the effectiveness of efforts to combat gender biases.

On the ecological front (E), access to natural spaces, the availability of sports equipment, environmental consequences, and progression into leadership positions are all affected. These factors can reduce women's willingness to engage in outdoor sports activities, thus limiting their participation in certain disciplines. Additionally, outdoor sports activities are often perceived as more masculine, which can discourage women from involvement in these areas (Onu Femmes & Banque africaine de développement, 2021). Moreover, sports equipment is not always tailored to their physique, and gender stereotypes influence their clothing choices. Therefore, these factors can also influence their promotion into leadership positions, as performance and self-confidence play a crucial role in decision-making and sports team management (Cooky et al., 2013). The environmental impact of sports equipment production and distribution is also significant, with implications for climate change and women (Kihl et al., 2014). The legal domain (L) is central to promoting gender equality. Laws favoring gender equality aim to prevent discrimination and ensure equitable access for women to leadership positions in sports. National and international sports federations can also contribute by establishing rules and policies to encourage women's representation in leadership roles through quotas or specific targets. Sports organizations can develop programs and initiatives to support women's progression into leadership positions, including training, mentorship, and professional development programs. It is necessary to highlight that legal approaches can vary from one country to another, and adapting to changes in the legal and regulatory framework is crucial to promoting gender equality in the sports context.

The crucial importance of promoting women's participation in decision-making positions within sports organizations stems from a constellation of socio-economic issues. The pursuit of gender equity, the aspiration for balanced representation, the deconstruction of stereotypes, the fight against biases, and organizational advantages emerge as major pillars (Williamson et al., 2020; Step Up Equality (SUE), 2020; Murgia & Poggio, 2018). It is imperative to establish parity in terms of opportunities and rights, enabling women to exert equitable influence in shaping sports decisions and policies. The contribution of women in leadership positions brings a diverse and enriching perspective, resulting in more inclusive, adaptive, and diversity-grounded decision-making. Moreover, female leadership is a source of inspiration, encouraging other women to pursue their aspirations within the sports domain. The rise of women in decision-making bodies leads to a profound questioning of gender stereotypes. This increased participation reflects competence and an equivalent capacity to contribute to sports development.

Furthermore, gender diversity within leadership teams and boards of directors translates to proven improvements in organizational outcomes. This is explained by collaborative decision-making enriched with multiple perspectives. Therefore, the promotion of women's involvement in sports decision-making roles asserts itself as an essential dimension of equity and inclusion, building a sports ecosystem that is fair, dynamic, and conducive to the flourishing of all stakeholders. Strategic pathways emerge based on a thorough analysis of scientific studies regarding the low representation of women in sports decision-making roles. These proposals encompass the implementation of diversity and inclusion-focused policies, the establishment of leadership and governance training programs specifically dedicated to women, the development of targeted mentorships, and the identification and removal of structural barriers hindering women's participation in sports governance. As an illustrative example, the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) is a promising initiative to increase gender equity and diversify leadership profiles within Alberta's sports organizations.

Additionally, a series of actions are discussed to counter the challenges inherent in the underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes. A comprehensive approach advocates for a

profound transformation of organizational mentality and culture and a revamp of educational, legislative, and employment paradigms. In the face of these challenges, the creation of supportive alliances, the utilization of research to pinpoint needs and gaps, advocacy, the establishment of participatory mechanisms, and partnering with existing entities emerge as crucial steps to overcome obstacles to women's access to sports decision-making spheres. Lastly, to encourage greater gender diversity within sports management positions, a sequence of measures is recommended. These measures include providing gender equality-focused training, implementing diversity and inclusion policies, and fostering gender plurality within sports management curricula.

Despite global research, the issue of women's leadership in sports presents a range of challenges that restrict women's access to leadership positions. These obstacles stem from various individual, organizational, societal, and contextual factors. Promoting women's leadership remains crucial to achieve balanced and diversified outcomes. The ultimate goal of this study is to establish an in-depth meta-analysis of these underlying mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequalities in sports leadership roles.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct a systematic study on the correlation and interference between sports leadership and gender, with a particular focus on women, a methodology of systematic literature review (SLR) in four phases was employed to select articles published on the topic of gender equality in

leadership in the sports sector from French and English databases.

The first step involved reviewing French and English articles published between 2000 and 2022, identifying key terms related to this research and possible queries to refine the results: ("Leadership" OR "Management" OR "decision-making positions" OR "Barriers") AND ("Gender" OR "Sport" OR "Sport Organizations" OR "Women"). In total, 157 references were extracted from various databases, to which additional references such as unpublished theses, reports, and statements were added. The second step was to select the leading indexed journals and digital databases, including Cairn, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science. The third step involved the cleaning phase of the collected results in RIS format and storing them in the ZOTERO platform. This step included removing irrelevant articles, completing missing information for meta-analysis, eliminating duplicate articles, and keeping only documents published within the specified timeframe (2000–2022). In the end, 130 references were retained from the selected articles after removing duplicates, references unrelated to the research, and non-exploitable documents.

Having gone through the titles and abstracts of all publications, a total of 80 articles were pinpointed that directly tackled the topic of women in sports leadership. However, after meticulously scrutinizing these 80 references, 48 were excluded due to their lack of alignment with the research objective. These publications revolved around leadership styles or other subjects beyond the scope of the study, which is not concerned with the underrepresentation of women in leadership

Phase 1: Keyword search and possible queries related to the research topic.

Phase 2: Selection of relevant indexed digital databases for the research.

Phase 3: Using Zotero for the cleaning and preprocessing phase.

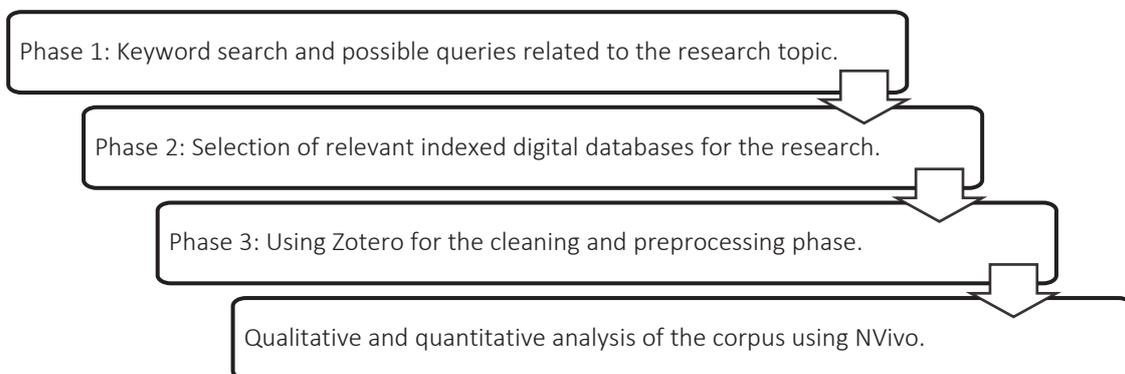Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the corpus using NVivo.

Figure 1. Process of selection and exclusion of articles in the databases

roles. Additionally, certain studies did not revolve around the sports context, leading to the removal of those not explicitly related to sports. In the end, 32 publications were selected (comprising 29 review articles and 3 thesis dissertations) for this literature review. Figure 1 illustrates the stages of the SLR methodology.

The fourth and final stage entailed harnessing the outcomes from the third stage (cleaned RIS database) through NVIVO for qualitative and quantitative treatment. The ensuing sections of the study subsequently delve into the analysis and exploration of the obtained results.

3. RESULTS

A corpus of 80 references is available in English and French. The proportion of the Francophone bibliography (52%) is nearly equivalent to that of the Anglophone bibliography (48%).

Table 1. Number of documents in the corpus

Types of documents	Languages		Total
	French	English	
Review article	32	36	68
Thesis	6	1	7
Study	2	0	2
Report	0	1	1
Journal article	2	0	2
Total	42	38	80
	52%	48%	100%

Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of documents in the corpus, highlighting the significance of review articles in the literature on sports leadership and gender. These articles
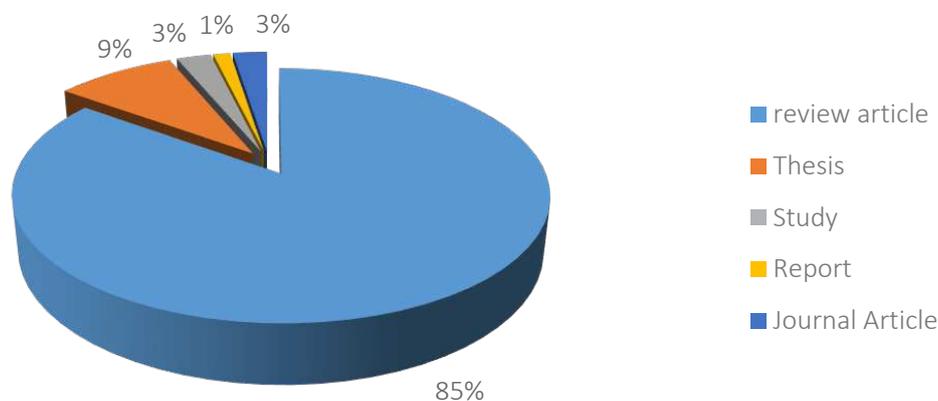
constitute the majority (85%) of the examined documents, indicating that this mode of communication is favored for presenting research and findings. As for theses, they represent 9% of the corpus. However, it is noteworthy that the theses written in French are more numerous than those in English. This disparity can be explained by the fact that theses are generally written in the language of the country where students pursue their doctoral studies, and in this case, it could suggest that specific research on sports leadership and gender has been conducted within the Francophone context. These findings suggest that scientific communication regarding sports leadership and gender heavily relies on review articles, particularly in English. Moreover, the higher number of theses in French could indicate more robust research activity in Francophone universities on this issue.

Figure 3 reveals that Cairn holds the top position with 38% of the references, followed by Scopus in the second position with 18% of the references, and ResearchGate (11%), Web of Science (9%), ScienceDirect and HAL (3%), while other databases lag behind with (1%).

Using the corpus of articles collected between 1999 and 2022 on sports leadership and gender in management science, it is observed that the first peak of publications was reached in 2004 with articles published in the French language. Additionally, it has been noted that since 2009, "sports leadership" and "gender" have become significant topics in both languages within the community. Further insights into the publications are provided in Figure 4.

Figure 2. Type of publications
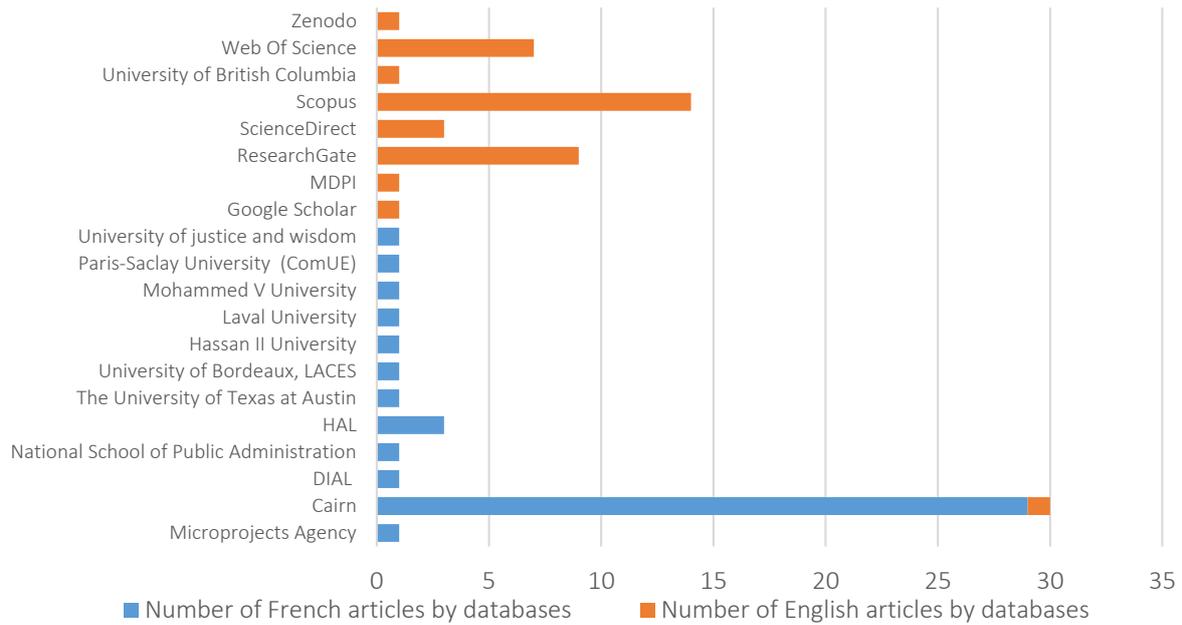
Note: Cross-language graph.

Figure 3. Scientific databases or search engines

The word cloud, also known as word analysis, is a method used to highlight the predominant words in a corpus through a visual representation. By utilizing the word cloud (as presented in Figure 5) generated from the analysis of collected French references, the most frequent terms in the abstracts, titles, and keywords of the corpus documents can be readily identified. The most important terms are typically emphasized by font size, proximity to the cloud's center, and their usage frequency.

Figure 5 showcases the analysis of the word cloud generated from the abstracts of the French references, revealing three distinct and significant categories within studies of sports leadership and gender. The first category, represented by the term "femmes," underscores the focus on the underrepresentation of women in the context of sports and management. The second category encompasses words such as "hommes," "sport" and "travail." Lastly, the third category encompasses terms like "decision," "genre," "organization," "federation," "postes," "égalité," and "carrière."

Regarding the English references, the word cloud illustrated in Figure 6 is also divided into three categories based on word frequency. The first category, represented by the term "Women," high-
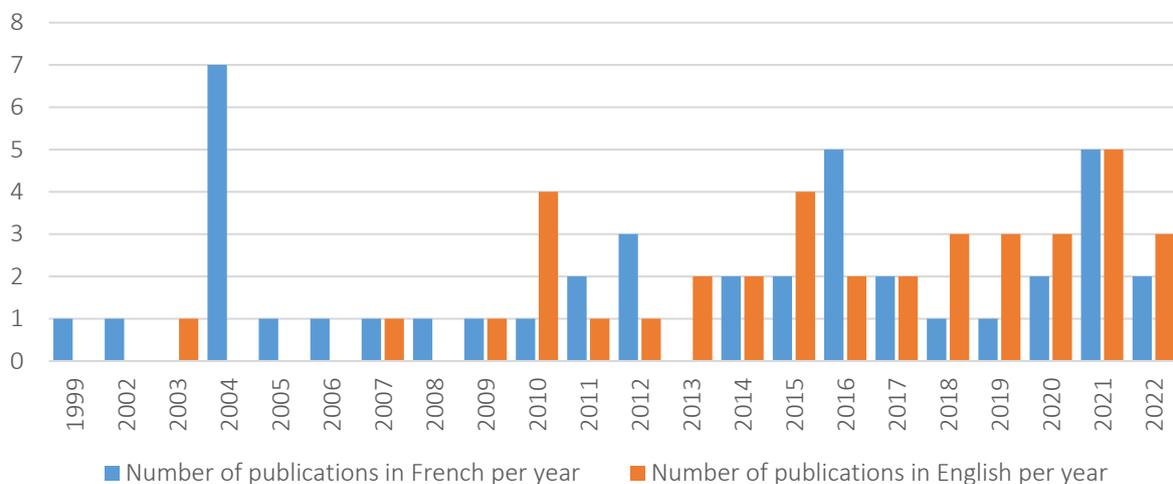

Figure 4. Number of publications per year

Figure 5. Word cloud generated from the French corpus

lights the emphasis on the underrepresentation of women in the context of sports and management. This reaffirms the significance given to the gender equality issue and the necessity to promote women's presence in leadership positions within sports organizations. The second category, including words like "sport," "leadership," and "gender," underscores the interest in gender dynamics within the sports field, emphasizing the need to examine the role of leadership in promoting gender equality in sports. Lastly, the third category encompasses terms such as "female," "positions," "organizations," "men," "management," and "male," thus underscoring the exploration of gender roles, positions, and

characteristics associated with women and men in sports leadership positions.

Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the number of types of approaches and research methods used in different studies according to each language. Among the 80 references included in the analysis, a quantitative approach was utilized in 11 references, while a qualitative approach was adopted in 47 references. Additionally, among these references, 8 employed mixed methods. However, only 13 of them utilized conceptual methods.

Table 2 presents the breakdown of research methodologies, approaches, sampling techniques, and

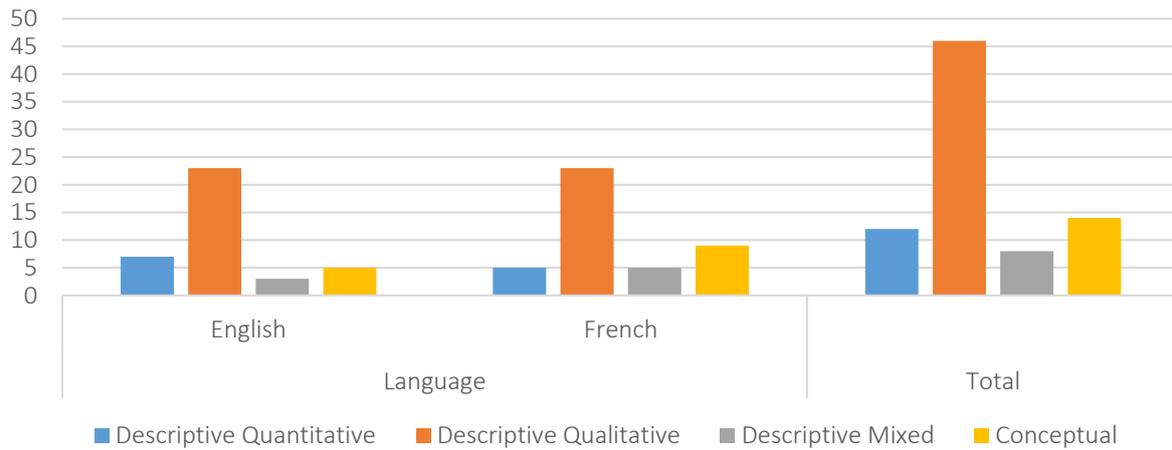**Figure 6.** Word cloud obtained from the English corpus

Figure 7. References according to research methodology and language

data analysis adopted in these references after an in-depth review of the methods used in the collected English references. Categorization revealed 6 references for quantitative studies, 24 for qualitative studies, 3 for mixed methods studies, and 5 for conceptual studies.

Regarding the studies in French, and after a detailed examination of the methods used in the collected references, it was found that among these references, 5 were suited for quantitative studies, 23 were suited for qualitative studies, 5 were suited for studies employing mixed meth-

Table 2. Approaches and data analysis in English references

Methodology	Approach	Instrument	Population	Sample Size		Data Analysis Techniques	Ref.
				Min	Max		
Descriptive	Quantitative	Questionnaires	Personnel, managers, women, expert members, women executives, board members, youth groups and their parents/guardians, directors	25	Over 100000	Descriptive statistical analysis, regression and variance model analyses, covariance analysis, correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, significance tests	7
	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, observations, auto-ethnographic narrative	Directors and board members (BM) and CEOs, women who completed the Female Leadership Development Program (FLDP), government officials and unemployed women, male managers, government officials, women executives, decision-makers, coaches, athletes, parents, women entrepreneurs, experts, students, managers, women middle and senior managers, women leaders, Māori women leaders, female executive board member, key members	4	131	Thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), classic Delphi method	23
	Mixed	Semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, data from multiple surveys, observations	Female managers, directors, administrators, students	24	514	Hematic analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, logistic regression analysis, hypothesis testing	3
Conceptual							5
Total							38

46

Table 3. Approaches and data analysis in Francophone research

Methodology	Approach	Instrument	Population	Sample Size		Data Analysis Techniques	Ref.
				Min	Max		
Descriptive	Quantitative	Questionnaires	City councilors, deputies, managers, administrators	85	13414	Statistical analysis, multiple linear regression, principal component analysis, confirmatory exploratory factor analysis	5
	Qualitative	Life stories, interviews, statistical writings, observations, informative and biographical interviews, ethnographic surveys	Journalists, parents, coaches, managers, civil society players, women involved in political parties and observers; sportswomen, women mountain guides, and members of national women's commissions; managers, middle and senior management, executives, women leaders, consultants and HR, sports technical advisors, general managers, women and men executives, surfers, employees, women coaches, lawyers	2	100	Thematic analysis	23
	Mixed	Interview, written, observation, questionnaire, comments	Leaders, guests, male and female decision-makers, group members and young people, general public, players, candidates	23	707	Textual statistics, thematic analysis, statistical analysis	5
Conceptual							8
Total							41

ods, and 8 were suited for conceptual studies. The details of the research methodologies, approaches, sampling techniques, and data analysis adopted in these references are presented in Table 3.

4. DISCUSSION

The examination of references in the corpus reveals a balanced distribution between English and French, underscoring the crucial significance of these languages in management and social sciences research, particularly in sports leadership and gender. The choice to communicate ideas and findings in both languages reflects the scale of the studied issue and its international scope.

The division of the corpus into two distinct sub-corpora, one in English and the other in French, offers a unique opportunity to delve deeply into works in each language. This approach also reveals potential differences or specificities in the research conducted within each linguistic context.

This linguistic distribution emphasizes the crucial importance of Francophone contributions in research on sports leadership and gender. These contributions can provide unique and complementary perspectives, thereby enhancing the overall understanding of the subject. Hence, it is imperative to further support research in Francophone countries to foster diverse viewpoints.

However, the limited representation of Moroccan references indicates a potential need for in-depth research on sports leadership and gender within this context. Encouraging more extensive research and applying advanced data analysis methods could bridge this gap and shed light on specific challenges in Morocco.

The slight predominance of articles in English (45%) compared to those in French (40%) reflects the preeminent role of English in global knowledge dissemination. This underscores the necessity to continue publishing in French while

acknowledging the broader impact of English publications to reach an international audience.

The analysis of publication trends highlights a continuous growth in interest in sports leadership and gender, thus underlining the persistent commitment of the academic community to delve deeper into gender-related issues within the sports domain.

The results of the word analysis reveal a diversity of subjects covered in studies, ranging from the underrepresentation of women to gender challenges and masculine dynamics. This diversity underscores the importance of conducting multidimensional research to comprehensively understand sports leadership and gender.

The utilization of diverse research methods encourages a more holistic approach to appre-

hending sports leadership and gender. The preference for qualitative methods reflects the desire to capture individual experiences and cultural contexts. The predominance of qualitative studies in English can indicate the importance placed on an in-depth exploration of experiences and interactions in the realm of sports leadership and gender. The lesser use of quantitative methods suggests the increased complexity of quantifying phenomena related to these subjects.

This study paves the way for exciting opportunities for future studies. By delving into these domains, research could not only deepen the comprehension of sports leadership and gender but also significantly contribute to the promotion of gender equality and diversity in the world of sports.

CONCLUSION

This meta-analysis conducted an in-depth exploration of fundamental works related to the representation of women in leadership positions in sports management. The study has revealed significant findings in research on sports leadership and gender. Firstly, a balanced distribution between English and French was observed in the references studied, emphasizing the crucial importance of these two languages in management and social sciences research, particularly in this context. This linguistic distribution led to the creation of two distinct sub-corpora, one in English and the other in French, thereby providing a unique opportunity to delve deeply into works in each language. This approach also highlighted the significance of Francophone contributions in research on sports leadership and gender, offering unique and complementary perspectives to the overall understanding of the subject. However, a limited representation of Moroccan references was identified, underscoring a potential need for more in-depth research on sports leadership and gender in this context. Furthermore, the study revealed a slight predominance of articles in English compared to those in French, reflecting the preeminent role of English in global knowledge dissemination while recognizing the importance of publishing in French to reach an international audience. Additionally, the analysis of publication trends showed continuous growth in interest in sports leadership and gender, indicating the sustained commitment of the academic community to deepen its understanding of gender issues in the sports domain.

Several areas of deficiency were identified throughout this study, thereby paving the way for promising research avenues to enhance the understanding of leadership in the sports context and gender-related dynamics. In this regard, it is crucial to note the limited presence of contextualized references within the corpus, underscoring the need to initiate specifically targeted investigations into sports leadership and its gender implications. Such an approach would shed light on the unique challenges faced by these contexts in terms of gender equality in the sports environment and contribute to the development of strategies to encourage increased participation of women in decision-making roles. Moreover, a comprehensive comparative approach between works in English and French could yield enhanced insight into nuances, perspectives, methodologies, and results, determining the distinct contributions of each language to the realm of sports leadership and gender research while also identifying areas that require further exploration.

Furthermore, deeper exploration into intersectional studies, which consider gender in conjunction with race, social class, and other identity aspects, could offer comprehensive perspectives on the challenges women from diverse backgrounds encounter, avoiding an isolated approach to gender. For a longer-term perspective, longitudinal studies could be highly beneficial, tracking the evolution of women's representation in sports leadership roles over time and evaluating the effectiveness of measures to promote gender equality. Delving into the dynamics of masculinity within the sports leadership context also merits closer scrutiny, as understanding how men perceive and interact with female leaders could provide a fuller perspective on gender dynamics and contribute to the evolution of traditional roles. As technology continues to play an increasingly significant role in sports and society, exploring its impact on promoting female leadership could be relevant, encompassing in-depth analyses of social media, online platforms, and how technology can overcome gender-related obstacles. A meticulous analysis of policies and organizational practices within sports institutions could be undertaken, shedding light on systemic barriers hindering women's progression into leadership roles and offering concrete recommendations for more inclusive organizational changes. Lastly, a comparative analysis across different countries would be invaluable for understanding how political, historical, economic, and sociocultural contexts influence women's participation in sports leadership. This could identify best practices and lessons drawn from international experiences.

Integrating women into leadership positions within sports is a pivotal means of promoting gender equality and enhancing the performance and efficiency of sports organizations. By identifying current gaps and addressing these diverse aspects, research can significantly promote gender equality in sports, fostering inclusive, high-performing, and equitable environments.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.
Data curation: Chaymaa Lotfy.
Formal analysis: Annie Cornet.
Funding acquisition: Annie Cornet.
Investigation: Chaymaa Lotfy.
Methodology: Chaymaa Lotfy.
Project administration: Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.
Resources: Chaymaa Lotfy.
Software: Chaymaa Lotfy.
Supervision: Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.
Validation: Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.
Visualization: Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.
Writing – original draft: Chaymaa Lotfy, Annie Cornet.
Writing – review & editing: Chaymaa Lotfy, Yasmina Bennis Bennani, Annie Cornet.

REFERENCES

1. Adriaanse, J. A., & Schofield, T. (2013). Analysing gender dynamics in sport governance: A new regimes-based approach. *Sport Management Review, 16*(4), 498-513. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.01.006

2. Adriaanse, J., & Schofield, T. (2014). The impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sport governance. *Journal of Sport Management, 28*(5), 485-497. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0108

3. Ahn, N. Y., & Cunningham, G. B. (2020). Standing on a glass cliff? A case study of FIFA's gender initiatives. *Managing Sport and Leisure, 25*(1-2), 114-137. https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1727357

4. Allia, K. (2005). Femmes diplômées et secteurs d'activité en Algérie [Women and business sectors in Algeria]. *Les cahiers du CREAD, 74,* 61-72. (In French). Retrieved from https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/downArticle/22/21/74/9566

5. Almuawi, M. S. A. (2021). Women in sport leadership in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of American Academic Research, 9*(2), 21-25. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355472333

6. Aman, M. P., Hanapi, S., Yusof, A., Razali, A. B., & Dev, R. D. O. (2019). Women in sport leadership positions in Malaysia: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences, 9*(11), 1506-1519. http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v9-i11/6715

7. Brackenridge, C., & Fasting, K. (2002). Harcèlement et abus sexuels dans le sport: Le contexte de la recherché [Sexual harassment and abuse in sport: The research context]. *Journal des Agressions Sexuelles, 8*(2), 3-15. (In French). Retrieved from https://olympics.com/cio/un-sport-sur/harcelement-et-abus-sexuels-dans-le-sport

8. Coenen-Huther, J. (2010). *L'égalité professionnelle entre hommes et femmes: Une gageure [Gender equality in the workplace: A challenge].* L'Harmattan. (In French). Retrieved from https://www.editions-harmattan.fr/livre-l_egalite_professionnelle_entre_hommes_et_femmes_une_gageure_josette_coenen_huther-9782296108400-30325.html

9. Cooky, C., Dycus, R., & Dworkin, S. L. (2013). "What makes a woman a woman?" versus "our first lady of sport": A comparative analysis of the United States and the South African media coverage of Caster Semenya. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 37*(1), 31-56. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723512447940

10. Cosentino, A., Weese, W. J., & Wells, J. E. (2021). Strategies to advance women: Career insights from senior leadership women in professional sport in Canada. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 3.* Retrieved from https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fspor.2021.716505/full

11. Culver, D. M., Kraft, E., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (2019). The Alberta women in sport leadership project: A social learning intervention for gender equity and leadership development. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal, 27*(2), 110-117. https://doi.org/10.1123/wspaj.2018-0059

12. Desvaux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S., & Baumgarten, P. (2007). *Women matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver* (Technical Report). McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/organization/pdfs/women_matter_oct2007_english.ashx

13. Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007a). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders* (308 p.). Harvard Business Review Press.

14. Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007b). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(9), 62-71. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership

15. Fagenson, E. A. (1990). Perceived masculine and feminine attributes examined as a function of individuals' sex and level in the organizational power hierarchy: A test of four theoretical perspectives. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 75*(2), 204-211. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.75.2.204

16. Femmes et sport au Canada et E-Alliance. (2021). *Les femmes et le leadership dans le sport: Aperçu de 2021 [Women and leadership in sport: A look ahead to 2021].* (In French). Retrieved from https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Leadership-Snapshot-2021-final-FR-May-26-2021.pdf

17. Goetz, M. (2003). *Women's education and political participation* (Background paper). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality, UNESCO. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146770

18. Harrison, C. K., Lapchick, R. E., & Janson, N. K. (2009). Decision making in hiring: Intercollegiate athletics coaches and staff. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 2009*(144), 93-101. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.316

19. iKNOW Politics. (2010). *The impact of illiteracy on young women.* Retrieved from https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/expert-responses/consolidated-response-impact-illiteracy-young-womens-political

20. Kamdem, E., Cornet, A., Mbimbi, P. S., Hakizumukama, A., & El Abboubi, M. (2021). La gestion des ressources humaines en Afrique subsaharienne et en Afrique du Nord. [Human resources management in sub-Saharan and North Africa]. PUQ. (In French). Retrieved from: https://www.puq.ca/catalogue/livres/gestion-des-ressources-humaines-afrique-subsaharienne-4044.html

21. Kihl, L., Babiak, K., & Tainsky, S. (2014). Evaluating the implementation of a professional sport team's corporate community involvement initiative. *Journal of Sport Management, 28*(3), 324-337. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2012-0258

22. LaVoi, N. M. (2016). *Women in sport coaching.* New York: Routledge.

23. Leglise, E. (2017). *Des femmes dans la direction des clubs de judo: «Plafond de verre» et rapports sociaux de sexe dans l'Espace Catalan Transfrontalier [Women in judo club management: The glass ceiling and gender relations in the Catalan cross-border area].* University of Perpignan. (In French). Retrieved from https://www.theses.fr/2017PERP0036

24. Martel, J. (2007). *"It's a long hard road to the top": The career paths and leadership experiences of women in Canadian sport administration.* University of British Columbia. https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0077134

25. Mazerolle, S. M., Burton, L., & Cotrufo, R. J. (2015). The experiences of female athletic trainers in the role of the head athletic trainer. *Journal of Athletic Training, 50*(1), 71-81. https://doi.org/10.4085%2F1062-6050-49.3.50

26. M'Mbaha, J. M., & Chepyator-Thomson, J. R. (2016). Portraits of Kenyan women in sport leadership: Evidence of determination, perseverance, and achievement. *International Journal of Sport Management, 17*(1), 22-48. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309375495

27. Murgia, A., & Poggio, B. (2018). *Gender and precarious research careers: A comparative analysis* (1st ed.) (256 p.). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315201245

28. Ngoyi, A. T. (2015). Rôle de la femme dans la société et dans l'Église: Pour une justice et une réconciliation durables en Afrique [The role of women in society and in the Church: For lasting justice and reconciliation in Africa]. *Théologiques, 23*(2), 203-228. (In French). https://doi.org/10.7202/1042750ar

29. Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership theory and practice* (8th ed.) (528 p.). Sage.

30. Onu Femmes & Banque africaine de développement. (2021). *Emplois verts pour les femmes en Afrique. [Green jobs for women in Africa].* Jura Editing Services & Jen Ross. (In French). Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/un_women_green_jobs_report_fr_0.pdf

31. Organista, N. (2021). Gendering of recruitment and selection processes to boards in Polish sports federations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 13*(2), 259-280. https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1859587

32. Pape, M. (2020). Gender segregation and trajectories of organizational change: The underrepresentation of women in sports leadership. *Gender & Society, 34*(1), 81-105. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243219867914

33. Step Up Equality (SUE). (2020). A handbook of best practices: Women's leadership and decision making within sport. Output of the Step Up Equality project. Retrieved from https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/sue-ahandbookofbestpractice.pdf

34. UNESCO. (2006). *Rapport mondial de suivi de lducationpour tous: Genre et ducationpour tous: le pari de lgalit.[Education for all global monitoring report: Gender and education for all: The leap to equality].* (In French). Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education

35. Vilo, G. F., Castillo, C. M., & Améstica, M. C. (2022). Barreras, facilitadores y estrategias que influyen en la participación femenina en juntas directivas de federaciones deportivas chilenas [Obstacles, facilitators and strategies influencing women's participation on the boards of Chilean sports federations]. *Retos: Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deporte y Recreación, 44*, 34-44. (In French). Retrieved from https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/retos/index

36. Walker, N. A., & Bopp, T. (2011). The underrepresentation of women in the male-dominated sport workplace: Perspectives of female coaches. *Journal of Workplace Rights, 15*(1). https://doi.org/10.2190/wr.15.1.d

37. Williamson, S., Carson, L., & Foley, M. (2020). Representations of new public management in Australian public service gender equality policies. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 39*(2), 235-250. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-05-2019-0145