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**Factors That Influence Women's Participation in
Sports in Kenya a Critical Literature Review**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of sport in Kenya especially women sport in Nairobi. It seeks to understand the factors that affect women's sport performance in Nairobi as well as establish the background of the athletes and the impact of sport engagement on their lives.

Methodology: The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature review was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

Findings: Boys and girls approach sport from different perspectives. Policy makers are urged to ensure that an equitable range of opportunities and learning experiences to accommodate the values, attitudes and aspirations of girls, be incorporated in programs to develop physical fitness and basic sport skills of young people. The study's conclusion based on these findings is that socio-cultural factors do determine a woman's engagement in sport and her performance in it in Nairobi Kenya.

Unique Contribution to Theory and Practice: The study recommends changes at both the institutional level and national level with regards to sport

Keywords: *Sport, athlete, gender equality and equity, patriarchy*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, sport is one of the prime ways people are brought together. Sport not only fosters social interaction; it entails social interaction. Sport as an entity in Kenya does not stand in isolation. It is linked to other social institutions like the mass media, family, education, economy and the political institution. Sport tournaments are held to commemorate special people and important events in our country business firms, Multinational Corporations and Non-Governmental Organizations capitalized on the crowd pulling nature of sports and its requirements to market, sell, campaign and disseminate vital information to the public. As more Kenyans become aware and appreciate the importance of leisure and recreation, competitive sport as a monetarily rewarding activity' is a serious issue and a common sociological feature in Kenya in this period of modernity, organized sport is highly capitalistic (Mboya, 2019). It is big business. As an emerging industry in Kenya, one can say that competitive sport contributes to progress through providing employment to coaches, doctors, cloth designers, athletes, engineers and constructors of sporting fields and stadia as well as those making sporting equipment.

This kind of solidarity 1 helps us to understand and acknowledge the fact that sport cannot be separated from other dimensions of society and an attempt to do that, is not feasible. Locally and internationally, competitive sport is so intertwined not only with the culture of a people, but with the political and economic institutions. Living in a period characterized with searches for alternative development strategies, Kenya seriously needs - policy wise - to change or shift from the largely monolithic, conventional ways of attaining development and turn inwards to itself and look for diverse strategies that will aid in combating its socioeconomic problems. This requires a certain degree of latitude, committed support and creativity offered and encouraged to the general population. Van Manen (2016), believes that the creative capacity of human beings is at the heart of the development process. The Mathare Youth Sport Association (an ongoing self-help development program in Mathare slums, registered under the Societies Act of Kenya as a non-governmental, nonprofit and non-political organization) is an example of what support, creativity and commitment can achieve.

The argument being voiced in this thesis is that if sport in Kenya is properly invested in and managed, it can produce positive ripples to the larger society. It is argued here, that if properly supported and encouraged, sport could open doors say to, psychologists, sociologists and nutritionists who can provide invaluable insights to sport practitioners especially the athletes and coaches, thus helping in the creation of job opportunities, something sinuously lacking in this country. In the Western world, sport has been commercialized and is a profitable venture thanks to the mass media. If one cares to look carefully, they will no doubt notice a relationship between the level of sport performance of a country or continent and its level of development.

In a collapsing economy entrenched with politics of tribalism and distrust, coupled with corruption at its highest, one may not expect much from such countries' athletes. This is because, these problems affect the sport institution and thus, athletes are not brought or cannot bring themselves to full self-actualisation. Kendrick (2018)), argued that after the satisfaction of other basic needs, an environment must have several other characteristics before self-actualization can occur. These include freedom of inquiry, freedom to defend oneself, order, justice, fairness and honesty. Sadly, many developing countries like Kenya find themselves in exactly opposite environments such that

athletes are relegated to secondary assets, they are marginalized, neglected and not seen as important contributors to societal development. Many people however share a belief that sport can make a difference in their lives and the lives of their community. Yes, a healthy and busy people are a vital ingredient for national progress.

As a nation, when it comes to competitive sport, the problem of performance be it of individual athletes, national teams and not excluding the coaches, is of top priority. As Kenyans we accept and demand good quality and excellent performance of our athletes manifested by medals, trophies, titles, money and other material benefits and frown upon as well as intensely criticize poor performance without duly understanding the nature of competitive sport. We fail to comprehend or are ignorant of the fact that performance is a sum of many factors. Instead, emphasis is on the highly masculine and capitalist values of winning and rewards, that is, the end rather than the means to the end is elevated regardless of who athletes are.

Another problem of sport in Kenya and the one that this thesis concerns itself with is the issue of the Kenyan female athletes and their performance locally and internationally. From another perspective, when one talks of sport, images of men, muscles, body strength, energy, rules and competition conjure up in the minds of the individuals. Thinking of women in this word sport does not naturally come up and when it does, the thought or cognition may not be well defined and accurate. Sport is an institution gendered along masculine definitions such that women in it are anomalous. Athletic competition for women at the higher levels is a fairly recent development. Wilson (2021), states that it awaited the emancipation of females from their enslavement to puritan concepts and from clothes that were unsuited for comfortable movement, let alone athletic performance. Women first participated in the Olympics in 1928. In Africa, it is in 1963 during the Games of Friendship that for the first time ever in international competition, African women ran and jumped for laurels. Women's athletics have developed around modifications of existing men's sport and whether these activities are best suited to the unique interests and the physiological, psychological and sociological needs of girls and women has not really been investigated (Pizzo, 2018))

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study approaches the female athletes as active agents in the world, having their own interests, shaping their own destinies within restricted possibilities, resisting and overthrowing these restrictions sometimes even acting in complicity with the forces that keep them in a state of social ingenuity (Waltz, 2020). Of interest to the researcher is the exploration on the ways gender bias if present is manifested in the gendered institution of sport and how' it affects the relative performance of the athletes. It has been noted that at the performance and excellence levels, the voluntary sector, and particularly the governing bodies of sport are key influences on the opportunity of women to participate. Their policies and practices in relation to development programs and resource allocation are often critical in enabling women to attain higher levels of achievement and get the necessary exposure to high-level competition and training (English Sport Council 1998). From the athletes (female) the investigator will be interested to know their experiences and perception on equity and equality on opportunities for competition, rewards, incentives, recognition, sponsorship, promotion and other forms of support in relation to male

athletes, experiences and perceptions about the social and physical environment of games and facilities and relationship between mass media and female sport in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to explore the nature of sport in Kenya especially women sport in Nairobi. It seeks to understand the factors that affect women's sport performance in Nairobi as well as establish the background of the athletes and the impact of sport engagement on their lives.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is worth being carried out for various reasons. Women have been studied in various ways and in a variety of contexts for many years. However, women's studies in Third World countries have not been holistic; they have tended to concentrate on a narrow range of issues while neglecting others like sport where women are found. The proposed study is justified because serious scholarly analysis of women and sport in Kenya is lacking and yet observations show that sport and physical activity contributes to women's development. Specifically, it was observed that one of the most effective ways of advancing the international women in sport movement is not only through developing stronger international and regional links and networks within sport, but to work more closely with organizations concerned with increasing the status of women worldwide. The observation emphasizes that the potential of sport and physical activity to empower women by enhancing both their physical development and their psychological development should not be underestimated.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 History of women's participation in sports

Women in sport are both a social reality and social anomaly; this therefore results in considerable confusion with regard to roles and perceptions of females in sport (Woods, 2020). If masculinity and femininity are viewed as polar opposites and if sports are largely assumed to be the prerogative of males, then any female intrusion into the domain of sport makes a mockery of the situation (Sinfield, 2015). Throughout history female athletes have been apologetic about their intrusion into a man's world and have compensated for their perceived lack of femininity by participating only in certain types of sports and by avoiding any serious commitment to sports.

2.2 Factors influencing sport participation

2.2.1 Formal education and increase in females' participation in sport

In present day settings, where education is a right for everyone, it is in schools and educational institutions that introduction to serious sport and physical activities for many women and girls begin. For many girls and women, introduction to sport in Nairobi occurs in school during Physical Education Classes (P.E) and games time. In this foundation stage, girls and possibly women are introduced to and taught the basic skills that they will require to take part in sport. It is this stage that they may begin to develop positive - or negative - attitudes to physical activity. The Kay report mentioned in the E.S.C (1998) points out that appropriate school experiences are central to any attempts to overcome inequality between the sexes in access to sport. Not only are school

experiences of physical education less successful at instilling a long-term interest in sport among girls in secondary schools than boys, but it is during secondary schooling and adolescence that many girls appear to turn away from involvement in sports.

According to the Kay report in E.S.C. (1998), girls at secondary schools compete at an equal level with boy's but for objectives that are achievement-oriented as well as socially oriented the report points out that the alienation of girls from sports arises from the interaction of the physical education experience at school with external influences that are particularly strong during adolescence. The report also states that girls are likely to withdraw' from team sports when they leave schools and that there is a discontinuity between the types of activities to which girls are most likely to have been introduced through school sport and the leisure activities in which they' might expect to take part as adults.

Thus, since boys and girls approach sport from markedly different perspectives, the Brighton Declaration of 1994 urges those responsible for sport, education, recreation and physical education of young people to ensure that an equitable range of opportunities and learning experience, which accommodate the values, attitudes and aspirations of girls, be incorporated in programs to develop physical fitness and basic sport skills of young people.

2.2.2 Role of socialization in determining

The Brighton Declaration (1994) points out that women are under-represented in the leadership and decision making of all sport and sport-related organization. This is hardly surprising; it is a reflection of the wider society¹ where women are under-represented. This claim has also been observed by Mazrui in Mangan and Baker (1987), The English Sport Council (1998) and the Norwegian Olympic Committee (1995) which are quick to note that participation by girls and women in most forms of sport lags behind that of boys and men. We should be aware of the fact that sport is a way and has been linked to the broader cultural and sociological forces of race, class, religion, sex and gender. These sociological facts are reinforced by the story system of a group or society. The story system of a culture is coextensive with all that is known and with all that a culture recognizes as knowledge or opinion (Williams and Pearce 1978). Due to this, women's participation in sport as athletes and various leaders is usually strained due to the underlying story systems that mold social institutions like sport. In explaining paucity of women in sport leadership, the gender stereotyped socialization (which relies heavily on various story systems like religion myth beliefs and ignorance) does not encourage women to see themselves as potential political candidates. A large number of people think that women do not enter politics because as girls growing up, they are not encouraged to do so. Findings by Roper Organization in Andersen (1997) showed that almost 40 percent of women and 41 percent of men think there are too few women in high political office to inspire other women, including young girls to vie for a post (Roper Organization in Andersen 1997). Thus, socialization is another key factor that influences women's participation in sport as athletes and leaders. According to Sabo and Runfola (1980:221).

Researchers have noted that boys tend to be socialized in childhood for the traditional male role, which includes an instrumental orientation toward the world and an emphasis on physical strength and athletic ability (Bozkurt, 2015). The ideal sportsman is tough, strong and aggressive. It is in the family - the first conditioning agency - where the boy learns very soon that to be a man he must

perform and compete better than girls at least physically (Heineken, 2015). To be a male child and be thought of as a sissy is a tragic experience. Within the family, he is schooled to muscular and psychic aggressiveness with toys and in games and other exploits denied to girls. He is supposed to understand from the start that social acceptance of him as a man depends on his being dominant towards and protective of females, while being successfully competitive towards males. Girls on the other hand are conditioned to suppress their mental and physical potential so that male - dominant culture prevails. It is known that young girls are capable of developing physical expertise and bodily confidence far beyond what they are permitted. Forming women who are physically adept and strong would be inconsistent with the derivative functions they are destined to perform in society. As adults, they would endanger the structures of patriarchy by expecting to hold leadership positions. Evans (2019), points out therefore that the psychosomatic power to challenge must be drilled out of the young girls. Women's attitudes towards competition and success are established early.

2.2.3 Role of culture in influencing women's sport participation

Religion which forms part of a story system of a group has been identified as a factor that influences general participation of women in sports. Decency in women is valued by many people in society'. The cultural and religious value for physical decency of women makes it impossible for some of them to put on shorts, bikers, tights, sleeveless shirts or clothes exposing some parts of the body like the abdomen, legs etc. in public setting. The sporting apparel actually demotivates them from competitive sport. Many cultures promote separatist activities among males and females. Women participation in sport is discouraged due to alleged fears that a high density' of social interaction occurring with the opposite sex will make women to be 'Moose'. Sentiments like these ones are engendered by patriarchal society's belief that women are devoid of mind and thus, should be controlled. Questions of beauty and sexuality' are also raised.

Beauty and aesthetics are cultural components and thus, they vary from society' to society in Africa and the rest of the world. The cultural definitions of femininity and beauty have largely influenced, women participation for those women and girls who wish to be seen as feminine. Research analysis noted that participation in sport may be increased if the potential benefits to body shape were emphasized and the fears about the negative effects allayed (E.S.C 1993). The muscle-myth is one such misunderstanding. It is feared that female athletes will produce bulging muscles, which imply masculinity. However, this myth has been dismissed by exercise physiologist⁷. Moreover, the aesthetics of sexuality according to Mazrui relates to the question of African women in sports. If the measure of sexual attractiveness is fatness and a measure of fitness is sliminess, then a wide exercise gap exists. This gap is the gulf between criteria of sexual beauty and criteria of sporting competence which varies.

Individuals choose to take part in sport and physical recreation for a variety of reasons, including health, fitness, and socializing and simple enjoyment. The (E.S.C) 1998 came to the following conclusion on some factors motivating or demotivating woman's sport participation. Women tend to value the social aspect of participation. This is the interactive part of sport in contradistinction to the male achievement orientation to sport and its motto of 'winning isn't everything, it is the only thing'. Also, women's participation in single - sex group activities such as aerobics during daytime or early evening hours, may be perceived as more acceptable to male partners than their

involvement in other types of sports which might entail the extended socializing that accompanies much male sport participation. In a study by Darcy (2017), restrictions in mobility, financial resources, time and energy directly affect women's participation in sport and their commitment to it.

2.3 Empirical review

Gitau (2019), conducted a study on the determinants of women's involvement in coaching individual and team sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This study sought to investigate the involvement of women in coaching individual and team sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Specifically, the study focused on: establishing and distinguishing between participation of women and men in coaching individual and team sports, assessing the factors influencing women's participation in coaching individual and team sports, determining the challenges faced by women in individual and team sports coaching and identifying strategies to address the challenges faced by women in individual and team sports coaching. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling was employed to select a sample of 164 women and men in individual and team sports. The coaches and heads of organizations who participated in the study were selected through purposive sampling. The results of the study showed that factors influencing women's involvement in coaching individual and team sports include family constraints, attitudes, perceptions and resources. The challenges are lack of clear career pathways and administrative support, competition from men and the high cost of training with minimal returns. Proposed strategies to enhance women's involvement include workshops, proper remuneration, change in stereotyping women involved in coaching sports, courses targeting women with flexible learning modes, promotion of women coaches and coaching, and sponsorship through sports organizations.

Ngeti (2017), conducted a study on female teachers' participation in the management of competitive sports programs in secondary schools in Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. The purpose of the study was to assess the female teachers' participation in the management of competitive sports programs in secondary schools in Taita-Taveta County, Kenya. The specific factors that were investigated included; type of school, age, education level, marital status, facility availability and psychosocial factors. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Descriptive statistics frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the characteristics of the respondents, while hypotheses were tested using chi-square and ANOVA. The results of the study showed that there is no statistically significant difference between participation of the female teacher in sports and the type of school they teach. Age yielded $\chi^2 = 2.443$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.295$, an indication that age had no influence on the frequency of female teachers' participation in competitive sports management in Taita-Taveta County. Marital status of female teachers in Taita-Taveta County did not significantly influence their frequency of participation in the management of competitive sports programs. Level of education and type of school did not have significant influence on competitive sports management. Moreover, adequacy of sports facilities and equipment yielded $\chi^2 = 1.00$, $df = 4$ and P value 0.262, an indication that facilities did not significantly influence the female teachers' participation in competitive sports management in Taita-Taveta County.

Wamaitha (2015), conducted a study on gender representation in sports participation and leadership in Teacher Training colleges in the Eastern zone- Kenya. The purpose of the study was

to investigate gender representation in sports participation and leadership in Teacher Training College in Eastern Zone of Kenya. The study was guided by the hypothesis that participation in sports and leadership in sports is not based on gender. Random sampling was used to select the students' respondents of the study. Purposeful sampling was also used to identify the coordinators, P.E teachers. The results of the study showed that the X^2 values were significant ($X^2 = 5.839$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$) which shows that there were differences in the participation of both public and private colleges. Athletics and soccer were the most popular games at the three levels i.e., primary, secondary and colleges. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in representation between public and private colleges in the Eastern zone in Kenya was rejected. In leadership representation, the hypothesis was rejected as the results indicated that there was a significant difference in leadership representation in sports in Teacher Training Colleges (TTC's). The findings on gender participation and sports indicated that more males participated in sports than women in TTCs. From the findings, it was recommended that funding should be improved in primary schools as they are the foundation for participation in sports in other levels.

2.4 Research gaps

A knowledge gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the matter being discussed. For example, Gitau (2019), who conducted a study on the determinants of women's involvement in coaching individual and team sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This study sought to investigate the involvement of women in coaching individual and team sports in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey research design. Stratified random sampling was employed to select a sample of 164 women and men in individual and team sports. The coaches and heads of organizations who participated in the study were selected through purposive sampling. The results of the study showed that factors influencing women's involvement in coaching individual and team sports include family constraints, attitudes, perceptions and resources. The challenges are lack of clear career pathways and administrative support, competition from men and the high cost of training with minimal returns. Proposed strategies to enhance women's involvement include workshops, proper remuneration, change in stereotyping women involved in coaching sports, courses targeting women with flexible learning modes, promotion of women coaches and coaching, and sponsorship through sports organizations. On the other hand, our current study focuses on factors that influence women participation in sports in Kenya.

Secondly, a methodological gap can be identified; for instance, Gitau (2019), applied a descriptive survey search design in investigating the factors that influence women participation in sports in Kenya and adopted the stratified random sampling method in selecting a sample of 154 women and men in individual and team sports. The results of the study showed that factors influencing women's involvement in coaching individual and team sports include family constraints, attitudes, perceptions and resources. The challenges are lack of clear career pathways and administrative support, competition from men and the high cost of training with minimal returns. Proposed strategies to enhance women's involvement include workshops, proper remuneration, change in stereotyping women involved in coaching sports, courses targeting women with flexible learning modes, promotion of women coaches and coaching, and sponsorship through sports organizations. On the other hand, our current study adopted a desktop study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify the main themes.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved in-depth review of studies related to the factors that influence women participation in sports in Kenya. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under the study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised of the initial identification of all articles that were based on the factors influencing women's participation in sports in Kenya. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject of the factors influencing women's participation in sports in Kenya. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to the factors influencing women's participation in sports in Kenya which was split into keywords. After an in- depth search into the key words (Sport, gender, patriarchy, gender equality and equity, athlete), the researcher arrived at 3 articles that were suitable for analysis.

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4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study attempted to understand the factors that explain women's engagement in sports. From the findings, formal education, socialization and culture are top factors that influence women's participation in sports in Kenya. Boys and girls approach sport from different perspectives. Policy

makers are urged to ensure that an equitable range of opportunities and learning experiences to accommodate the values, attitudes and aspirations of girls, be incorporated in programs to develop physical fitness and basic sport skills of young people. The study's conclusion based on these findings is that socio-cultural factors do determine a woman's engagement in sport and her performance in it in Nairobi Kenya.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study hereby offers some recommendations that could positively affect women athletes as a group. At the individual level, since women are in sport for the love of it and to prove their worth as women, they should not be afraid to participate in sport to their fullest ability regardless of gender role expectations. Hence, they should not tolerate sexism, stereotypes, injustice, inequality and second-class treatment as a group and in society as a whole. The study recommends that women truly in sport for the mentioned reasons to arise fight and voice in order to have sport tailored according to their desires at club level and at governing body level. In a capitalistic society, what one loves or believes in is worth fighting for using all means necessary. For women sport to go a notch higher in Nairobi Kenya, the women should adopt strategies that will push forward their sport cause.

At the academic level the study recommends that social researchers and anthropologists investigate deeper into the African sporting history to find out more on the games of the past and their similarity or difference with present day games, with a view of recreating or modifying them into structured sport. These sports should then be introduced and marketed locally as they have a historical base.

At the institutional level which has to do with the management of teams, players, coaches and daily activities of club, the study advocates that women teams should be directed by women passionate about sport and its development. These women should be assessed in light of women sport projects initiated and causes of action taken to mitigate the obstacles women athletes' encounter.

At the national level, qualified females and males should be engaged to manage sport as a profession not a part-time job or hobby. They should be employed on contract by the government to overhaul the present cross-sectional management crisis of sport. They should be challenged to come up with a sport industrial structure that invests in and creates wide class athletes as well as income for them and the nation as a whole.

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