

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

### Navigating Gender Dynamics in Sport and Physical Activity Employment

<sup>a</sup>María-Dolores González-Rivera, <sup>b</sup>Maria Luisa M. Guinto and <sup>a</sup>María Luisa Rodríguez-Hernández

<sup>a</sup>Universidad de Alcalá, Facultad de Medicina y Ciencias de la Salud, Departamento de Ciencias Biomédicas, Madrid, España, <sup>b</sup>University of the Philippines Diliman, College of Human Kinetics, Department of Sports Science, Philippines

#### Abstract

*Gender disparity in employment remains a pervasive global issue, and the sport and physical activity (SPA) sector is no exception. Despite a notable increase in women's sport participation in recent years, this growth has not yet fully translated into significant strides toward gender parity in employment, as men continue to hold most SPA-related occupations. This study investigated the persistent gender inequalities in the SPA industry, focusing on the Madrid region in Spain. A survey was conducted with 400 SPA professionals—102 women and 298 men—to examine occupational representation, employment pathways, employment determinants, contractual arrangements, salary differentials, and organisational affiliations. The findings confirm the underrepresentation of women across all domains of SPA employment, especially in sport coaching for competition. The results showed that recruitment and hiring of women rely primarily on curriculum vitae reviews or public examinations, unlike their male counterparts who lean on their social networks or personal referrals to secure employment in the SPA sector. Findings also revealed that men hold a substantial proportion of formal and informal contracts, including non-contracted jobs, affirming their dominance in both ends of the SPA contractual employment spectrum. Moreover, the study indicated that women often face unfavourable work conditions, including extended working hours and salary differentials. Informed by institutional theory and intersectionality, the discussion highlights the entrenched structures, norms, and practices that reinforce the marginalisation of women based on overlapping identities, sustaining employment practices and outcomes over time. Initiatives are proposed to strengthen equitability and transparency in hiring practices, increase job security, and improve work conditions, enabling organisations and institutions in Madrid to mobilise resources and programmes that foster gender parity in the SPA sector. By advocating gender-informed initiatives that challenge embedded norms and biases, recommendations may be adapted to diverse contexts and cultures where similar gender disparities exist in SPA industries worldwide.*

#### Keywords:

Decent work and economic growth, Gender Equity, Job Security, Quality Education, Recruitment Transparency, Reduced Inequalities

#### Recommended Citation:

González-Rivera, M. D., Guinto, M. L. M., & Rodríguez-Hernández, M. L. (2024). Navigating gender dynamics in sport and physical activity employment. *International Sports Studies*, 46(2), 52-81, <https://doi.org/10.69665/iss.v46i2.64>

#### ORCID ID

María-Dolores González-Rivera  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1101-6502>  
Maria Luisa M. Guinto  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2430-555X>  
María Luisa Rodríguez-Hernández  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3659-4958>

## Introduction

The urgency of achieving gender parity in sport and physical activity (SPA) is reinforced by its widespread impact on society, particularly on providing services that depend on the effective engagement of SPA professionals (Campos-Izquierdo, 2019). Achieving gender equality in SPA is not just a matter of fairness but a crucial step toward creating a more inclusive and empowering environment for women employees. It ensures that their knowledge, skills, perspectives, approaches and contributions are fully recognised and valued in enhancing the quality of services offered while fostering a collaborative effort to promote community health. A diverse SPA workforce can address various needs and preferences, improving accessibility and engagement for all societal groups. However, despite laudable advances in promoting gender equality in sport and physical activity, empirical evidence suggests a persistent gender disparity that demands urgent attention and concerted efforts (Guinto et al., 2021; López de D'Amico & González-Rivera, 2021). Literature underscores a prevailing trend wherein men continue to outnumber women in the SPA labour market, a pattern resistant to change despite the growth of the SPA industry and its associated employment opportunities (López de D'Amico & González-Rivera, 2021).

The pursuit of gender parity in sport has gained a solid foothold on the European and global political agendas, particularly with gender equality as one of the priorities of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (López de D'Amico & González-Rivera, 2021). The Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration on Women and Sport augments this commitment, targeting organisations involved in the various facets of sport and physical activity (International Working Group, 2014). Legislative initiatives further assert the importance of

gender equality in sport. The White Paper on Sport (Commission of the European Communities, 2007), as one of the European Commission's main contributions to the theme of sport and its role in the daily lives of the European Union (EU) citizens, called on member states to promote media coverage of women's sporting activities, encouraging the emergence of women role models, career opportunities of women in sport-related areas, and appointment in decision-making positions. It also opened future perspectives for sport at the EU level (European Union, 2017). In the Madrid region of Spain, the Law 6/2016 of 24 November was instituted to govern the exercise of sports professions, obligating professionals to champion effective equality for women in sport and prevent discrimination at all levels.

Despite global campaigns, legislative developments, and international conferences advocating for gender equality in physical education (PE) and sport, a glaring underrepresentation of women appears at all levels, from participation to employment (Benn et al., 2016; López de D'Amico et al., 2021; López de D'Amico & González-Rivera, 2021). The Council of the European Union (2014), in its conclusion on 'Gender equality in sport,' encouraged sport organisations to address gender imbalances in executive boards, committees, management, and coaching roles. However, gender inequalities remain, transcending mere representation to encompass broader issues, particularly within the SPA sector. Women continue to face challenges ranging from lower wages and job insecurity to limited opportunities for promotion and fewer women mentors (Kubayi et al., 2017; Alfaro et al., 2013; Viñas & Vilanova, 2014). While the SPA labour market is expanding and diversifying, researchers reveal a constant underrepresentation of women, not only in Spain but also across Europe and globally (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Campos-

Izquierdo et al., 2016; Joseph & Anderson, 2016; Pippas, 2017; Kane & LaVoi, 2018; European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, 2022). Data extracted by Eurostat (2024) confirms that men outnumber women in sport employment and that this gender gap has increased since 2011.

Studies on the working conditions of women SPA professionals are scarce, limiting data-informed policies and programmes to enhance participation, employment and leadership opportunities for women. Researchers have identified challenges such as the gender wage gap, job insecurity, salaries, working hours, and contract types, particularly in roles such as sports trainer and sports director (Alfaro et al., 2013; Viñas & Vilanova, 2014; Kubayi et al., 2017). An examination of men's recruitment and selection processes in the SPA industry affirmed their reliance on acquaintances and impressions in addition to qualifications, potentially marginalising women in organisations predominantly led by men (Campos-Izquierdo & González-Rivera, 2010). Similarly, an analysis of 12 SPA occupations in Spain found that occupations such as sport coach, SPA manager, personal trainer, and extra-curricular PE teacher exhibited higher percentages of men than women (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016). The study noted that the role of sport animator was the sole occupation in which women outnumbered men, accounting for 52% of the workforce.

### *Micro and Macro Views of Gender Disparity in SPA*

In examining gender disparities in SPA, the macro-level analysis of institutional theory and the micro-level analysis of intersectionality theory can be integrated to explore how formal and informal structures, policies, and norms intertwine with overlapping social identities—such as gender, race, class, status and age—to shape

systemic inequalities. This combined approach allows the research to address complex phenomena for a broader understanding of how sociocultural mechanisms disadvantage and privilege people according to their intersecting identities.

From the lens of institutional theory, persistent gender disparity in SPA may be understood by investigating the foundational role of institutional factors in shaping opportunities, policies, and norms. It defines institutions as composed of “more-or-less taken-for-granted repetitive social behaviour that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange, thus self-reproducing social order” (Greenwood et al., 2008, pp. 4-5). Recognised for its versatility and applicability in the context of sport (Robertson et al., 2022), the theory addresses individual, organisational, and systemic dynamics in disparity. Scott (2014) emphasised the enduring aspects of institutions’ structures—rules, routines, and norms—becoming standard practices that are not only expected but also considered normal or unavoidable. However, he stressed the importance of shifting the focus of analysis from institutional structures to processes to explore how institutions enable and constrain human agency, emphasising their dynamic and reciprocal relationship (Jakobsen, 2014).

In particular, the theory elucidates how formal and informal structures—such as regulations, norms, practices and routines—evolve into authoritative frameworks that shape and regulate social behaviour. Walker and colleagues (2017) assert that examining institutionalised sport practices offers insight into the enduring overrepresentation of male leadership within sport organisations. In the context of SPA employment, institutional theory provides a suitable lens to investigate how prevalent organisational norms, professional standards, hiring practices, and

cultural expectations contribute to the underrepresentation of women. These formal and informal structures often benefit conventional networks and career pathways for men, fortifying gender disparities despite explicit societal and policy-level allegiance to equality.

From the perspective of intersectionality theory, systemic inequalities within SPA may be analysed by examining how individuals' multiple identities intersect to create simultaneous discrimination and privilege related to gender, race, class and other categories of identity as social processes (Kelly et al., 2021). For example, a married woman with children may face compounded biases related to her gender and marital and parental status, particularly in hiring or promotion processes within SPA organisations. Conversely, a white, non-disabled, heterosexual man in a leadership position may afford him greater access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, often without the need to overcome the same barriers faced by those with marginalised intersecting identities (e.g., black person with a disability, homosexual, rank-and-file). Intersectionality has long been utilised as a framework to analyse the complex interconnection of social categories in investigating marginalisation; however, Kimberlé Crenshaw is acknowledged for articulating the term to position the Black feminist critique of experiences in the interconnection of gender and race (Crenshaw, 1989,1991). Since then, intersectionality has been applied in SPA research to consider how multiple social categories intersect and influence each other in creating disparities among individuals and communities (Lee et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2021; Sone et al., 2024; Young et al., 2024).

Specifically, intersectionality considers how institutional policies, presumably designed to be neutral, disproportionately disadvantage individuals with intersecting

marginalised identities, such as single mothers or older women in SPA roles. It also examines how socioeconomic class, marital and parental status interlink with gender, creating barriers to educational qualifications or professional networks that are prerequisites to SPA employment. Moreover, it investigates how perceptions and stereotypes tied to overlapping identities reinforce disparity, as in the case of LGBTQ+ women in leadership positions due to heteronormative and patriarchal prejudices (Best, 2019; Shamloo et al., 2022; Stephenson, 2020).

This study investigated the trends in recruitment, employment pathways, salary differentials, working conditions, and organisational affiliations between genders in the Madrid region of Spain. Using institutional theory, it explored how formal and informal organisational structures, policies, and norms may explain persistent gender disparities in SPA employment. By incorporating intersectionality, the study also examined how simultaneous social identities, such as gender, class, status, education or age, may intertwine in shaping SPA employment experiences and outcomes. This integrated approach informed key areas for reform to advance employment equity in the SPA sector.

## Methodology

### *Location of the Study*

Madrid, the central capital of Spain, is an autonomous community occupying 8,028 km<sup>2</sup> and housing 6,750,336 residents, making it one of the most densely populated regions in the country. According to the latest figures published by the National Statistics Institute

(2023), the gender distribution comprises 3,520,182 (52.14%) women and 3,230,154 (47.86%) men. The sport system in the Community of Madrid is a product of the collaboration between the public and private sectors to promote and develop physical and sporting activities among its residents. In the public sector, various regional and local entities are involved in the organisation and development of sport in the region (National Council of Spain, 2005).

The sport industry in Spain is a major driver of employment at the national level. For every million euros generated, the industry creates 12.4 jobs, 30% higher than the national average. Gyms and sport facilities are particularly impactful, generating 42 and 23 jobs per million euros in revenue, respectively. These figures are drawn from the 2020 Thermometer of the Sports Ecosystem in Spain report (Manca et al., 2020), based on data from the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2023). Although these numbers appear impressive on the national scale, an investigation of sport and SDGs in Spain reveals that the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in sport remains stalled with the persistence of male dominance in the field (Campillo-Sánchez et al., 2021).

Spain ranks fourth in the EU on the 2023 Gender Equality Index with a score of 76.4 out of 100, exceeding the EU average by 6.2 points (European Institute for Gender Equity, 2023). Spain's score has risen by 10 points since 2010, driven primarily by significant progress in the domains of power (+28.5 points) and time (+9.6 points). Its score improved by 1.8 points between 2020 and 2023, pushing its rank by two places to fourth. Despite these advancements, inequalities remain most pronounced in the work domain, where the country scores 75.4 points and ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the EU, dropping five places since 2020. The sub-domain of participation, with a score of 82.3, presents

the greatest area for improvement, placing Spain 22<sup>nd</sup> in the EU. In contrast, the sub-domain of segregation and quality of work shows stronger performance, with a score of 69.0 points and a ninth rank. Although analysts suggest that the narrowing of the gap across the EU could reflect progress in countries previously lagging, Spain's need to address the gender disparity in the domain of work demands attention.

### *Sample*

This study investigated the SPA occupations of 400 participants residing in Madrid by employing a survey methodology. The occupational categories utilised in the survey were drawn from those identified in the research of Campos Izquierdo et al. (2016). A multi-stage probabilistic sampling approach was implemented to recruit participants. Stratification was performed across several layers, covering the geographical areas within the Community of Madrid, municipalities, sports facilities, and participant demographics. Within each layer, random sampling was conducted, with proportional allocation based on the size of the geographic area represented by each municipality.

The absence of a comprehensive census of SPA professionals in Madrid made it challenging to estimate the representative sample size accurately. To compute the adequate sample size of the SPA workforce, we presupposed the target population to be infinite or very large (Rodríguez-Osuna, 2002). Assuming a population variance of  $p$  and  $q = 50$ , the margin of error for this study was set at 5%, with a confidence level of 95.5% and a probability interval of 2%. This sampling approach was adopted to ensure robust and statistically reliable findings concerning SPA occupations in the Madrid region.

Participants were selected using multi-stage probability sampling with stratification



applied at sequential levels: from the Community of Madrid area to municipalities, sports facilities, and individual participants. Random sampling at each stage ensured proportional representation based on the geographical size of municipalities, with all municipalities included within each stratum defined by territory size and habitat. This approach ensured comprehensive geographical coverage, enhancing sample representativeness. Inclusion criteria required participants to be professionals in SPA roles within Madrid's sport facilities. Exclusion criteria omitted individuals without formal SPA responsibilities or those outside selected facilities. A listing of Madrid's SPA professionals was generated through sport facility visits. Once the sports facilities in the municipalities were randomly selected from the pool, the person providing SPA services was invited for the interview. Participation in the study was purely voluntary; thus, additional participants from the listing were recruited following the initial refusals.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected over a year by a research assistant (RA) with a degree in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences. Before the data collection stage, the RA underwent extensive training in conducting structured interviews using the survey questionnaire. The Committee on the Ethics of Experimentation Research and Animal Experimentation at an accredited university granted ethical approval for this research.

### *Instrument*

The original PROAFIDE questionnaire (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011) comprised 57 items, categorised into five sections: (1) Socio-demographic characteristics, (2) PAS functions, (3) Professional performance within specific occupations, (4) Work characteristics, and (5) Training

characteristics of these professionals. Some questions permitted single answers, but several questions allowed multiple responses. Its validation procedure involved a three-phase approach. Sixteen independent experts initially evaluated the questionnaire. Afterwards, a group of national and international experts discussed its content in detail. Pilot testing was finally conducted with 250 individuals actively involved in Physical Activity and Sport (PAS) functions across diverse regions of the Spanish peninsula.

The second section, which covered the classification of sport and activity functions from the PROAFIDE (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011), was utilised to gather data for the current study. Three items within the PAS functions were modified to align with the professions specific to the Community of Madrid, following the Autonomous Community's professional regulations. Five experts with doctorates in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences thoroughly reviewed these modifications. After careful evaluation, the experts approved the final version of the study questionnaire. This process ensured the questionnaire's relevance and applicability to the current research, allowing the systematic examination of gender disparities across various variables, including current SPA employment, methods of job acquisition, perceived importance of employment elements, working conditions, and types of organisations employing participants.

To clarify, institutional theory and intersectionality were not used in PROAFIDE's questionnaire design (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011). Instead, this study used the theories to help interpret the data collected rather than retroactively rationalise the study design, the contents of the questionnaires, or the constructs under investigation. Using theoretical frameworks in discussing results, even when not employed during survey design, can enhance the depth and context of research findings (Godfrey et al., 2010).

### *Data Analysis*

The information was organised and processed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 19 (IBM Corp, Armonk, NY, USA). Univariate and bivariate descriptive analyses were conducted alongside an inferential analysis of contingency tables. The data analysis involved calculating measures like the Phi correlation coefficient and Pearson's Chi-square value and then determining their significance.

### *Results*

#### *Occupational Representation*

The distribution of SPA occupations between genders is presented in Figure 1. The data reveals a clear pattern of women's underrepresentation across all roles, with marked disparities in several professions. Certain occupations within the SPA sector were notably skewed toward male representation. For instance, the positions of SPA advisor, researcher, and consultant were held exclusively by men. Similarly, over 80% of roles, such as SPA theory instructor, fitness instructor, and sport coach, were occupied by men. In most SPA professions, the proportion of women remained below 30%, except for PE teachers and physical sport readaptators, where women constitute 42.6% and 31.3%, respectively, of the workforce. In particular, the job of a physical sport readaptator consists of readapting, reconditioning, and re-education through tailored sport, physical activity, or exercise to restore physical function and movement for those recovering from injury or illness, including athletes of individual and team sports at different levels of competition (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016).

The chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test and Phi coefficient ( $\phi$ ) were utilised to analyse the

relationship between the categorical variables of gender and SPA occupation. By calculating the chi-square statistic and comparing it to critical values or obtaining  $p$ -values, the test helps determine if the observed gender distribution across occupations deviates significantly from what would be expected if there were no gender disparities. On the other hand, the Phi coefficient provided insight into the magnitude and direction of association between gender and occupation. A larger absolute value of the Phi coefficient indicates a stronger association between gender and occupation, suggesting a greater degree of gender disparity in job distribution. Moreover, a positive Phi value indicates that one gender is more likely to be employed in certain occupations compared to the other gender, while a negative value indicates the opposite.

Data analysis from Table 1 reveals significant gender disparities in several SPA occupations, with the most remarkable contrast observed among the position of sport coaches. In this role, only 16% of the professionals were women, compared to 83.9% of men, a highly significant gap ( $p < 0.001$ ). Similar gender imbalances were observed in the personal trainer and PE teacher roles, yielding a significance level of  $p = .004$ , indicating substantial underrepresentation of women. The fitness instructor role also displayed a significant difference, with women making up just 16% of the workforce compared to 83% of men ( $p = .034$ ). Even in the role of PE Teacher, where women have relatively higher representation at 42.6% women compared to 57.4% men, the disparity is still statistically significant, underscoring the prevailing trend of male dominance across all SPA occupations.

Table 1. SPA occupations across genders

Occupations	Women		Men		$X^2$	$\phi$	P $p < 0.05$
	n	%	n	%			
Sport instructor	42	29.4	101	70.6	1.755	-.066	.185
Personal trainer/physical trainer/fitness trainer	52	26.8	142	73.2	8.383	-.145	<b>.004</b>
Sport animator	2	28.6	5	71.4	.035	-.009	.851
Extra-curricular PE teacher	21	26.6	50	70.4	.755	-.043	.385
Sport coach	30	16.1	156	83.9	16.071	.200	<b>.000</b>
Fitness instructor/Aerobics instructor	15	16.9	74	83.1	4.504	.106	<b>.034</b>
Physical-Sport Readaptator	31	31.3	68	68.7	2.340	-.076	.126
SPA manager	14	26.4	39	73.6	.366	.030	.833
PE teacher	20	42.6	27	57.4	8.153	-.143	<b>.004</b>
SPA theory instructor	2	15.3	11	84.7	.724	.043	.395
SPA advisor/Researcher/Consultant	0	0	5	100	1.733	.066	.188

\*Multiple responses to this item were allowed, with some respondents holding more than one SPA job. Percentages were computed on the total number of men and women in each occupation.

### Employment Pathways

Table 2 features the various methods men and women use to secure employment in the SPA sector. The most notable observation is the reliance on personal networks for both men and women, although the extent differs. Among men, 48% secured employment through acquaintances, making it their most common strategy to secure employment. Typically, such acquaintances were met in sport events and competitions. In comparison, only 39.5% of women reported securing a job through personal contacts within the industry. These findings highlight gendered differences in employment strategies within the SPA sector, with men demonstrating a stronger reliance on personal networks than women. This disparity may reflect broader gender dynamics, where men have predictably more extensive networking opportunities than women in the male-

dominated environment of SPA, strengthening their employment prospects. Nonetheless, the findings affirm the value of networking within the SPA sector, regardless of gender, suggesting that such connections play a crucial role in securing employment opportunities.

Among women, the second most prevalent route to SPA employment was through public entrance examinations (20.2%), asserting the importance of formal recruitment processes and merit-based selection. On the other hand, the prevalence of internal promotions (23.9%) as the second most prevalent avenue for men underlines the importance of career progression within organisations for male SPA employees. This suggests that men often advance through established progression within their organisations, pointing to internal talent development structures that may favour men.



Table 2. Means of securing SPA employment across genders

Ways of securing employment	Women (n= 102)		Men (n=298)	
	n	%	n	%
Internal promotion	20	18.3	78	23.9
Internet	3	2.8	15	4.6
Job bank	13	12	14	4.3
Acquaintances	43	39.5	157	48.2
Advertisements	4	3.6	16	4.9
Practicum	4	3.6	21	6.4
Public entrance examinations	22	20.2	25	7.7
Total responses*	109	100	326	100

\*Multiple responses to this item were allowed; thus, the total number of responses exceeded the total number of respondents

### *Factors Influencing Employment*

The prioritisation of employment factors by women and men reveals interesting gender dynamics in how each group navigates job opportunities and perceives valuable qualities in applicants. Table 3 shows that interpersonal skills stand out as the foremost factor for securing an SPA position, as identified by both cohorts, with 15.6% of women and 18.2% of men acknowledging its paramount importance. This finding makes sense in connection with the previous finding that both women and men can benefit from their network of acquaintances to secure employment, suggesting the value of interpersonal skills in securing a job in SPA. This shared emphasis underscores the value of relationship-building skills in the SPA environment, where peer and client interactions are key to job success.

There are notable differences, however, in how men and women prioritise other factors. For women, “having been an athlete” is second, followed by “lifelong learning” as third. Women seem to value soft skills that contribute to effective client interactions and workplace harmony. “Having been an athlete” may be considered a competitive edge as it showcases their physical fitness and conditioning background, enhancing their credibility in promoting health and well-being. Moreover, upholding “lifelong

learning” reflects a commitment to continuing professional development. In a competitive industry that thrives on new trends, techniques, and advancements in health and wellness, women appear to recognise the need to stay updated with the latest industry practices, enhancing their expertise and credibility.

On the other hand, men consider “references or contacts” as the second most influential component in securing SPA employment, with 16.5% choosing them as a key factor. This second priority among men aligns with data on the premium they put on acquaintances to secure employment in the SPA industry. The potential advantages men perceive in leveraging social capital to navigate the job market include enhancing their job prospects and potential for internal promotion. “Having been an athlete” ranks third for men, indicating that they, like women, value athletic experiences in boosting credibility in the SPA industry. The fact that it ranks lower than networking, however, indicates that men might view their athletic experience as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, a well-established professional network. This difference underscores how men might prioritise a more strategic use of relationships and connections over individual qualities when advancing their careers in the SPA industry.

Among the key elements of employment for women and men, only two yielded significant gender differences: academic record and professional experience. Women placed higher importance on academic achievements, with 7% identifying them as crucial compared to only 3.8% of men. This difference is statistically significant at  $p = .028$ , indicating that women are more likely than men to view a solid academic background as a vital component of SPA employment. This focus on formal education may reflect women’s perception that professional qualifications serve as an objective and recognised validation of their skills and knowledge. Women can enhance their competence and credibility by emphasising academic achievements and overcoming potential gender biases in a competitive job market. Moreover, academic

records may be seen as a means to establish their expertise and legitimacy, especially in fields where credentials can directly impact hiring decisions.

While both genders affirm the value of professional experience, women place significantly more emphasis on it (14.3% for women versus 11% for men, with a  $p$ -value of  $.005$ ), indicating that women view a proven track record and relevant work history as essential to securing SPA employment opportunities. In contrast, men tend to consider networking and references crucial to gaining entry into the SPA industry. These differences highlight broader gendered strategies in professional advancement, where women prioritise clear-cut credentials to validate their expertise while men utilise social capital and networks as pathways to employment opportunities.

**Table 3.** Level of importance ascribed to employment elements across genders

Elements	Sex	Very important/ Important		Moderately important		Slightly Important/ Not important		Chi-Square	Phi	P ( $p < 0.05$ )
		n	%	n	%	n	%			
Higher level qualification	F	48	12.3	6	5.7	23	5.2	7.625	.157	.106
	M	126	11.7	16	4.8	91	6.6			
Lifelong learning	F	50	12.8	9	8.6	37	8.3	6.147	.127	.188
	M	112	10.4	32	9.5	139	10.2			
Academic record	F	27	7.0	7	6.6	62	13.9	10.848	.169	<b>.028</b>
	M	41	3.8	34	10.1	208	15.2			
Professional experience	F	47	12	14	13.3	35	7.9	14.706	.197	<b>.005</b>
	M	119	11	38	11.3	126	9.2			
Knowledge of languages	F	12	3.0	9	8.6	75	16.9	6.448	.168	.130
	M	19	1.8	22	6.6	242	17.7			
Knowledge of new technologies	F	9	2.3	15	14.3	71	15.9	2.475	.081	.649
	M	31	2.9	35	10.4	217	15.8			
Have been an athlete	F	56	14.3	8	7.6	32	7.2	2.208	.076	.698
	M	165	15.3	35	10.4	86	6.3			
Appearance	F	33	8.4	13	12.4	50	11.3	7.969	.145	.093
	M	91	8.4	64	19.0	128	9.3			
References or contacts	F	48	12.3	13	12.4	35	7.9	5.611	.122	.230
	M	178	16.5	23	6.9	82	6			
Interpersonal skills	F	61	15.6	11	10.5	24	5.4	6.844	.134	.144
	M	197	18.2	37	11	49	3.6			

\*Multiple responses to this item were allowed; thus, the total number of responses per category exceeded the number of respondents.

\*\*Percentages were computed against the total responses of women and men for each element. For example, the total responses for “higher level qualification,” comprising the responses of women and men across the three response options, is 310; this number represented 100%.

### Contractual Arrangements

Table 4 shows that 71% of individuals with formal contracts are men, while only 29% are women. Combined with the observation that 83% of those without formal contracts are

men compared to just 16% of women, results reflect a complex gender disparity in employment conditions. This discrepancy suggests that men dominate both ends of the employment spectrum within the surveyed

population—holding a considerable percentage of formal contracts and a

substantial proportion of informal, non-contracted roles.

*Table 4.* SPA working contracts across genders

	Contract		No contract	
	n	%	n	%
Women	90	29	20	16.3
Men	221	71	103	83.7
Total	311	100	123	100

\*The total number of responses is more than the total number of respondents because some held more than one SPA job.

Table 5 adds further nuance to the previous finding by demonstrating that among those with contracts, men are more likely to hold temporary positions (27.4%), while women are more likely to be in stable, permanent positions (72.6%). The combined data suggest that while men dominate the total number of contracts (71%), women with contracts (29%) are more likely to have secure, permanent employment. The prominence of men in temporary roles may reflect either a preference for or necessity to take on short-term positions, often characterised by flexibility and job instability. This pattern could imply that although men might be vulnerable to limited job security, benefits, and legal protection, they also have potentially greater mobility or career flexibility due to the nature

of the positions they opt to take. Conversely, the prevalence of women in permanent positions could indicate a higher priority on securing financial stability through long-term employment. This finding may also align with societal expectations, where women are more likely to bear the responsibilities for family welfare, such as caregiving for children and elders. Consequently, women may prioritise jobs that offer stability, predictable schedules, and comprehensive benefits. Meanwhile, the higher proportion of men in temporary jobs might indicate a greater willingness or necessity to change jobs to pursue professional goals, reflecting divergent career strategies and social expectations between genders in the Madrid region

*Table 5.* SPA type of contracts by gender

	Type of contract			
	Permanent		Temporary	
	n	%	n	%
Women	33	32.3	59	27.4
Men	69	67.7	156	72.6
Total	102	100	215	100

\*Total responses are less than the total number of respondents because only those with contracts responded

*Work Hours and Conditions*

Table 6 reveals that men dominate the "less than 21 hours" category, accounting for 79.3% of the total, compared to women, who represent only 20.7%. In the "21–40 hours" range, women make up a slightly larger proportion (33%) but remain underrepresented compared to men, who constitute 67% of this group. Notably, in the "more than 40 hours" category, women's representation increases to 37%, reflecting a larger proportion of women in this high-

commitment range relative to their presence in the lower-hour categories. Findings affirm that men consistently outnumber women across all employment categories. The data revealed, however, that a higher proportion of men work less than 21 hours per week, which aligns with their predominance in temporary jobs. Conversely, more women work more than 40 hours per week, reflecting their greater representation in permanent positions.

*Table 6. SPA weekly work hours across genders*

Sex	less than 21 hrs		21 to 40 hrs		more than 40 hrs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Women	52	20.7	43	33	7	37
Men	199	79.3	87	67	12	63
Total	251	100	130	100	19	100

\*The total number of responses is more than the total number of respondents because some held more than one SPA job.

*Salary Differentials*

Table 7 reveals intriguing insights into gender disparities in income distribution within the studied population. Men dominate the lowest salary bracket, earning less than 1000 euros per month, with 76.9% of respondents in this category being men compared to only 23.1% of women. Conversely, women are notably overrepresented in the 1000–1500-euro

range, making up 65.1% of this group, while men account for only 34.9%. The trend reverses in the higher salary brackets: men represent 65.7% of those earning 1500–2000 euros, compared to 34.3% of women, and among those earning over 2,000 euros, 57.1% are men, while only 42.9% are women. Overall, the data show that women are clustered in the mid-level salary range, while men are more prevalent at both the lowest and higher salary levels.

*Table 7. SPA monthly salaries across genders*

Sex	< 1000 €		1000-1500 €		1500-2000 €		> 2000 €	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Women	57	23.1	28	65.1	12	34.3	3	42.9
Men	189	76.9	15	34.9	23	65.7	4	57.1
Total	246	100	43	100	35	100	7	100%

\* The total number of responses is less than the total number of respondents because some were unsure and did not answer this question.

### Organisational Affiliation

Table 8 presents the representation of women and men across different types of SPA organisations. Women comprise 42.5% of employment, while men comprise 57.5% of employment in public entities. Although men outnumber women, the distribution here is relatively more balanced than other organisation types. This suggests that public entities offer a more equitable environment for both genders, likely because of formalised government policies or mandates that promote diversity and inclusion.

Gender disparity is more noticeable in private companies, with men representing 72.1% of employees compared to only 27.9%

of women. This pronounced imbalance implies that SPA private companies might exhibit gender bias in hiring or providing limited opportunities for women. The most considerable disparity is found in non-profit organisations (NGOs), where men comprise a sizeable 85.4% of participants, leaving women with only 14.6%. Even though NGOs are usually linked to community-oriented and volunteer-driven work, these numbers show that men are still the majority in non-profit SPA organisations. This observation might indicate that certain institutional or sociocultural factors provide men an advantage in leadership roles or involvement in non-profit sport sectors.

Table 8. Type of SPA organisations across genders

Sex	Public Entities		Private Companies		Non-Profit Organisations	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Women	37	42.5	50	27.9	28	14.6
Men	50	57.5	129	72.1	164	85.4
Total	87	100	179	100	192	100

\*Multiple responses to this item were allowed; thus, the total number of responses exceeded the total number of respondents

### Discussion

The results of this investigation into the SPA labour market in Madrid confirm the persistent gender disparity in all SPA occupations in the Madrid region, confirming the broader imbalance in the work domain of Spain as reflected in the 2023 Gender Equity Index (European Institute for Gender Equity, 2023). These results resonate with previous research showing a marked underrepresentation of women within the Spanish SPA workforce (Alfaro et al., 2013; Burton, 2015; Viñas y Vilanova, 2014). Consistently, the outcomes align with the study by Campos-Izquierdo et al. (2016), which examined the distribution and classification

of SPA professionals nationwide. Contrary to previous findings showing marginal numbers of women in the role of sport animator, this study confirmed the continued male dominance across all SPA vocations, underscoring the incessant gender status quo over the years.

Walker et al. (2017) noted that men are overrepresented in leadership and coaching roles in SPA organisations, showing how certain practices have become the standard for career trajectories. These positions often match traditional conceptions about authority, decision-making, and physical skills, which have long been associated with men. Because men mainly occupied these



roles over time, the culture and structure of sport organisations reinforced this trend, making it harder for women to position themselves in these roles (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2021; Solanas et al., 2022; Wasend & LaVoi, 2019). For instance, hiring and promotion processes could implicitly favour men because of gendered expectations about leadership or the belief that sport coaching for competition is more of a “man’s job.” While these practices are rarely deliberate, they are fueled by the cultural inertia of these institutional norms.

These disparities can be further examined by considering how the intersection of gender and socioeconomic class in a highly masculine leadership sport environment compound challenges for women in the SPA sector. For example, apart from the dominant masculine cultural norms that may discourage women from pursuing leadership positions (Pape, 2020; Ryan & Dickson, 2018; Sotiradou & Haan, 2019), class-based access to resources and education can limit opportunities for women for upward mobility (Evans & Pfister, 2021; Melton & Bryant, 2017; Piggott, 2021). The findings reinforce how institutional policies intersect with social identities, exacerbating systemic barriers for women aspiring for higher status or more lucrative SPA roles.

Among the SPA jobs examined, PE teaching emerged with the highest number of women employed. Even though women do not outnumber men in this job, this finding matches those from the INCUAL-CSD study (Arbizu, 2008), which found that PE teaching and sport instruction are jobs predominantly held by women, particularly in the earlier years of schooling. Teaching is typically considered an ideal job for women due to its compatibility with family responsibilities (Kelleher et al., 2011; Moreau, 2018; Simmie, 2023). Moreover, it is considered a relatively well-paid, stable profession for women (Nyamubi, 2017; Sahito & Vaisanen,

2020). Despite the high proportion of women in teaching, especially at the primary and secondary levels, more men hold top leadership positions such as superintendents and principals (Hamzeh, 2023; Holmqvist & Lantz Ekström, 2024; Maranto et al., 2018; Tarbutton, 2019), reinforcing traditional conceptions about authority and decision-making, which have long been associated with masculinity.

The findings also accentuate gender differences in networking opportunities within the SPA industry. As a form of social capital, networking offers substantial benefits, including access to job prospects, internal promotions, and salary advantages (Ansmann et al., 2014; Bjärsholm, 2018; Davern & Hachen, 2006; Hasan, 2018; van Emmerik, 2006). While the study affirms that both genders value social connections, research shows they perceive networking differently to secure jobs (Forret, 2006; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Zdroik & Babiak, 2017; Woehler et al., 2021). Men tend to focus on creating positive first impressions and maintaining homophilous and multi-purpose networks that provide access to influential peers and mentors.

In contrast, women prioritise building substantive relationships and forming networks centred on social support and friendships, which often provide fewer direct career benefits and reinforce gender disparities in access to resources and advancement opportunities (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2007; Mengel, 2020; Weis & Lay, 2019). Women may also view networking as “inauthentic” or akin to politicking, find it immodest, and face challenges participating in after-work socialising due to work-life commitments (Ely et al., 2011; Greguletz et al., 2019; Socratous, 2018; Wanigasekara, 2016). For Muslim women, after-office networking in the form of “happy hours” automatically excludes them due to religious and moral

beliefs against alcohol consumption (Arifeen, 2020). Such scenarios demonstrate the intersection of gender, marital status, parental role, and religion in preventing women from engaging in networking practices acceptable to men. Consequently, they depend on merit-based processes, such as curriculum vitae submissions and public exams, emphasising academic achievements and professional experience as objective markers of their qualifications.

Differences in working conditions, such as the higher number of men working without contracts and as self-employed, further reveal underlying inequities that mirror long-held gender expectations about work and economic roles. Men are often seen as more likely to engage in entrepreneurial or risky jobs, as these roles are associated with notions of independence, boldness, and toughness—traditionally considered masculine (Gupta et al., 2008; Gupta et al., 2009; Hamilton, 2013; Raile et al., 2022; Thébaud, 2010). These ideas become part of how the SPA job market works, making it seem normal that men are better at flexible or informal jobs, even if they do not offer much stability or security. As such, more men tend to gravitate toward these jobs, while women seem to be pushed into more stable, contract-based positions like teaching or office work. This scenario reflects the broader societal beliefs about what men and women should do and how secure their jobs should be.

Institutional theory posits that structural disparities are self-reinforcing (Farrell, 2018). The acceptance of men holding high-risk jobs discourages women from seeking these positions, as they often feel such roles are harder to reach or less appealing due to additional challenges, like unequal access to professional connections or higher expectations to fulfil caregiving responsibilities. Over time, these patterns have become a standard part of how organisations, like those in the SPA industry, hire and keep

employees, thereby fortifying inequality. The theory also emphasises the role of legitimacy in keeping these inequalities in place (Robertson et al., 2022). The high number of men in non-contract or self-employed jobs might seem like a normal response to market needs or personal choices, concealing the deeper structural biases that push men and women into different kinds of work. Consequently, initiatives to confront the imbalance may be dismissed as unwarranted, given the "natural" distribution of roles.

The intersection of gender and marital status thus reinforces a gendered division of labour, where women—especially those who are married or have caregiving duties—are often expected to prioritise job stability and security, which are typically found in contract-based positions like teaching (Carter; 2016; Ivancheva et al., 2019; Van Damme, 2017). Marital status plays a significant role here, as women are frequently assumed to have domestic and caregiving responsibilities that make them less likely to take on high-risk, entrepreneurial roles (Khasanah & Firmansyah, 2024; SyedSalleh & Mansor, 2022). This societal expectation can limit women's access to more flexible or informal employment opportunities, as they may be pushed into more stable roles that align with the perception of women as primary caregivers and nurturers whose work should be secure and predictable. This dynamic contributes to the gender disparities observed in SPA employment, as these intertwined societal norms shape the job market.

Salary differentials in the study show men clustering at both the lowest and highest salary brackets, suggesting a dual impact of institutional norms. At the low end, temporary and part-time roles—prevalent among men—offer limited income potential. At the high end, male-dominated networks and systemic biases may facilitate access to senior, high-paying positions (Bjärsholm,

2018; Lalanne & Seabright, 2016) Women's concentration on mid-level salaries reflects institutional pressures prioritising stable employment but limiting upward mobility (Anthony & Soontiens, 2022; Sharafizad et al., 2024; Weinkopf, 2014). Men's dominance at salary extremes could also reflect overlapping privileges, including greater flexibility to navigate informal jobs or leverage male-dominated professional networks for lucrative roles. For women, overrepresentation in mid-range salaries suggests a tension between seeking financial security and overcoming barriers to high-earning roles, compounded by societal expectations and gendered labour norms (Bertrand, 2018; Bonikowska et al., 2019; Gartzia, 2016).

The gender disparities in organisational affiliations further affirm structural dynamics within different SPA organisations. Public entities with more balanced gender representation may be influenced by formalised policies and practices promoting equality, such as government mandates for diversity and inclusion (OECD, 2019; Profeta, 2020). Private companies and NGOs, on the other hand, exhibit pronounced gender imbalances (Fatima, 2024; Njoki, 2021; Steinfield & Scott, 2018), possibly due to ingrained cultural norms and institutional biases that favour male representation in leadership or decision-making roles. Despite their focus on community and social good, NGOs are not shielded from broader societal patterns of gender inequality. Women in these sectors often face compounded marginalisation, stemming from both the gender dynamics within the sector and the wider institutional environment that restricts their access to power and decision-making roles.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study have underscored the persistent underrepresentation of women

across all SPA occupations in the Madrid region, reflecting similar trends observed in other regions of Spain and various international contexts (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016; European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, 2022; Joseph & Anderson, 2016; Kane & LaVoi, 2018; Pippas, 2017). A key strength of this investigation lies in its comprehensive examination of the full spectrum of SPA occupations in the Madrid region of Spain. It offers vital baseline data and a broad view of the labour market dynamics in this sector that can inform succeeding initiatives to encourage greater representation of women in the SPA industry.

The small sample size and limited demographic information in the study, however, prevented a more comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of intersecting social categories across specific occupations, recruitment practices, and work conditions. While quantitative data provides valuable insights into broad patterns and trends, it does not capture the nuanced, context-specific factors contributing to gender disparities and working conditions in SPA employment in Madrid. Qualitative data—such as those generated from interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies—is essential in exploring individual experiences, perceptions, and the sociocultural factors shaping workplace dynamics. Additionally, future research should integrate institutional theory and intersectionality from the outset, ensuring consistency across all stages of the research and enabling an examination of institutional constructs (e.g., hiring policies, referral systems, promotions, or salary differentials for similar jobs) and intersecting social identities (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status, marital status, or parenting roles). Future initiatives should delve into the employment dynamics of women in specific SPA occupations, particularly those that have been

underexplored in existing literature, such as those involving personal trainers or sport coaches in male-dominated sports and athletic directors or leadership positions within sport organisations. Additionally, studies could focus on niche vocations like sport officials, event coordinators, or roles within emerging fields such as e-sport and adaptive sport programming.

To address gender disparities in the SPA labour market in the Autonomous Region of Madrid and other regions with similar contexts, we draw from institutional theory and intersectionality to propose meaningful changes that challenge entrenched norms, practices, and policies perpetuating these inequities. We present the following actionable recommendations to disrupt these deeply-rooted norms and practices to foster gender equity in SPA employment.

#### *Restructure recruitment practices*

The reliance on acquaintance-based recruitment methods typical in other industries reinforces exclusionary networks that primarily benefit men, reinforcing institutional norms that marginalise women (Allemand et al., 2021; Beaman et al., 2018; Fernandez & Rubineau, 2019). Recruitment practices must uphold merit-based and transparent processes. This requires standardising clear criteria for hiring and promotions and removing biases often embedded in informal hiring systems. SPA organisations can adopt digital application platforms and structured interview processes that allow for objective and transparent evaluation of qualifications and competencies (Boned et al., 2015; Alfaro et al., 2018). Institutional theory asserts that informal network norms become self-reinforcing (Farrell, 2018). Challenging these requires intentionally designing formal mechanisms that replace subjective processes with objective and equitable ones (Boned et al., 2015; Alfaro et al., 2018). It would be

interesting, for example, to use selection procedures that evaluate qualifications without necessarily putting the name or gender on the CV.

#### *Promote public entrance examinations and competitive selection procedures*

Public examinations play a pivotal role in institutionalising meritocratic norms in employment. Women prefer public entrance examinations to secure SPA jobs, trusting in their fairness and transparency. Such systems, however, are not universally implemented. Mandating standardised public entrance examinations across SPA organisations can create equitable access to employment opportunities based on knowledge and skills. Government and regulatory bodies should authorise fair examination systems and provide resources to support consistent implementation. Public examinations can institutionalise merit-based norms, shifting organisational cultures away from the reliance on patronage or favouritism that has historically marginalised underrepresented groups such as women (Campos-Izquierdo & González-Rivera, 2010).

#### *Implement gender-equity hiring policies*

Current gender-blind hiring policies often fail to address structural barriers that disadvantage women in the workplace. These barriers include implicit biases, unequal access to professional networks, and stereotypes that lead to higher performance standards for women (Greguletz et al., 2018; Wynn & Correll, 2018). Researchers have suggested that gender quotas can effectively challenge organisational norms and promote gender equality in organisations; however, their implementation and impact are shaped by existing institutional environments and norms (Adriaanse, 2017; Terjesen & Sealy, 2016; Valiente, 2020). As such, the implementation of gender quotas must be

supported by the professional development of women in SPA so that they can occupy positions with competence and confidence. Moreover, analysing how intersectional identities influence job allocation and career progression can uncover hidden biases and lead to more equitable outcomes.

### *Promote professional development and support systems*

Women often lack access to professional development opportunities, such as advanced training or leadership programmes, which are crucial for career advancement. Organisations should establish inclusive professional development initiatives tailored to women across different and simultaneous social categories, including leadership training, workshops, and certification programmes (Alfaro et al., 2018; Foppiano-Vilo et al., 2022). Subsidising costs for these programmes or offering flexible schedules can make them accessible to women with caregiving responsibilities. By creating alternative leadership and skill development pathways, organisations challenge the established norms that typically prioritise men for professional growth opportunities (Luthi, 2023; Moody & Toni, 2017). It is also recommended to incorporate gender equality training modules into sport management and technical training programmes for both women and men to encourage ally behaviour among men (Madsen et al., 2020). To encourage participation, these programmes could be supported by scholarships (Alfaro et al., 2018).

### *Create supportive workplace cultures*

Gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in SPA workplace cultures, making it challenging for women to succeed, particularly in male-dominated roles like coaching or management (Solanas, et al., 2022). Zero-tolerance policies for harassment, family-friendly workplace

practices, and diversity training programmes are some of the workplace regulations that promote gender-inclusive environments (Azmat & Boring, 2020; Henriquez-Caballero, 2024; Sullivan, 2022). Establishing networks within SPA organisations that include both women and men can also foster community and support (Burton, 2021; González-Rivera et al., 2017; Spoor & Hoye, 2014). Changing workplace culture requires intentionally disrupting informal norms and practices that maintain male dominance. Formal policies with operationalised regulations signal a commitment to equity and help redefine acceptable behaviours and expectations.

### *Redefine leadership norms.*

Leadership roles in SPA organisations are predominantly held by men, reflecting deep-seated perceptions that associate authority and decision-making with masculinity (Clayton-Hathway & Ulrike, 2019; Joseph & Anderson, 2016). Challenging these stereotypes involves promoting and normalising diverse leadership styles that value collaboration and inclusivity. Recognising and celebrating successful women leaders in SPA can help disrupt these biases and provide visible role models. In sport organisations, redefining success beyond the traditional "winning at all costs" model may attract more women to pursue leadership positions (Adriaanse, 2017). Additionally, implementing policies that ensure gender diversity within leadership pipelines is crucial. Shifting leadership norms requires reframing notions of legitimate authority and creating new templates for leadership that include diverse gender perspectives (Foppiano-Vilo et al., 2022). Promotional campaigns focusing on gender equality in sport management could include recognising outstanding professional women and sharing their biographies on the official websites of



public sport sector agencies (Alfaro et al., 2018).

### *Establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms*

Addressing gender disparities in the SPA industry requires more than well-intentioned policies; it demands robust monitoring to track and evaluate progress. Without these mechanisms, initiatives risk being superficial, short-lived, or ineffective. Gender audits and regular reporting on workforce composition, salaries, and career progression by gender must be established. These metrics reveal inequities and identify patterns of prejudice or structural barriers within SPA organisations (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). Linking organisational funding or recognition to progress on gender equity metrics is essential in safeguarding accountability and making progress toward gender equity a visible priority (Acosta et al., 2020; Cansino et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2017). Ultimately, robust monitoring shifts gender equity from a peripheral concern to a core SPA industry value, enabling sustainable and systemic change (Alfaro et al., 2018; González-Rivera, 2016; Pati & Doherty, 2023).

### *Engage stakeholders across levels*

Researchers have indicated that resistance to gender equity initiatives is common in organisations, often stemming from a defence of existing norms and identities (Bleijenbergh, 2017; Knoppers et al., 2021; Soler et al., 2017). Engaging all stakeholders in SPA, including male allies, is crucial for successfully implementing gender equity policies (López de D'Amico & González-Rivera, 2021; Madsen et al., 2022; Nash et al., 2021; Anicha et al., 2020). Regular dialogues must be conducted to educate and engage SPA stakeholders about the importance of diversity and inclusion and address resistance through transparent communication. Engaging stakeholders

disrupts the social inertia that sustains exclusionary practices, aligning individual and collective behaviour with reformed institutional norms. The dissemination of national and international laws and standards on women's right to equality in managerial and technical roles within the SPA sector could also be enhanced. This can be achieved by regularly providing sport institutions and organisations with updated equality legislation relevant to the sport industry.

### *Initiate policy advocacy for broader systemic change*

Achieving gender equity in the SPA industry requires a multilevel approach addressing individual, organisational, and societal factors. Policy reforms that mandate equitable hiring practices, enforce gender equity in leadership, and incentivise organisations to achieve gender diversity benchmarks must be incessantly pursued and institutionalised. Collaborations between SPA organisations, academe, government and non-government agencies, and advocacy groups can amplify these efforts. Systemic policy interventions reshape the broader regulatory and cultural environment, embedding new norms that transcend individual organisations (Burton & Leberman, 2017; González-Rivera & Álvarez-Llargo, 2023; Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019).

These recommendations, driven by this study's findings and informed by institutional theory and intersectionality, emphasise the need for intentional, systemic interventions to dismantle entrenched inequities and foster lasting change in the SPA labour market in and beyond the Madrid region. These strategies aim to create a more equitable and inclusive field that fully utilises women's potential in all SPA roles by addressing both formal structures and informal norms.

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the gender-specific characteristics of SPA employment, serving as a foundational step

toward advancing gender equity in the SPA labour market, particularly in the Madrid region. While the findings are particularly relevant to the Madrid region, their implications extend beyond this context, offering insights applicable to SPA labour markets globally. Implementing programmatic and policy interventions to improve service quality, transparency, and professionalism is crucial for creating equitable opportunities for women and addressing deeply entrenched gender disparities within the SPA industry. By promoting gender-informed initiatives that address ingrained norms and biases, recommendations can be tailored to diverse contexts and cultures facing similar gender disparities in SPA industries worldwide.

### **Acknowledgement**

We thank the physical activity and sport professionals who participated in this study, which provided valuable baseline data on the gender distribution in the SPA industry in Madrid, Spain.

### **Funding**

This study was made possible with the funding support of the University of Alcalá with reference CCG2016/HUM-072.

### **Disclosure statement**

The authors report no potential competing interests in the conduct, authorship, and publication of this research.

### **Ethics Approval**

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Committee on the Ethics of Experimentation Research and Animal Experimentation (CEI-EA) at the University of Alcalá (CEI/HU/2016/10).

### **Notes on Contributors**

*María-Dolores González-Rivera* is an Associate Professor at the Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Alcalá (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain). Her research interests include physical education, gender and sport, and the sport labour market. Please direct correspondence to [marilin.gonzalez@uah.es](mailto:marilin.gonzalez@uah.es)

*Maria Luisa M. Guinto* is an Associate Professor and Research Director at the Department of Sports Science of the College of Human Kinetics at the University of the Philippines Diliman. Her research interests include mental health and well-being, gender and sport, spirituality, mindfulness, community resilience, and sport for development. Please direct correspondence to [mmguinto1@up.edu.ph](mailto:mmguinto1@up.edu.ph)

*María Luisa Rodríguez-Hernández* is a Professor at the Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Alcalá (Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain). Her research interests include physical activity for people with disabilities and assessment of training and competition in team sports. Please direct correspondence to [mluisa.rodriguez@uah.es](mailto:mluisa.rodriguez@uah.es)

## References

- Acosta, R. V., & Carpenter, L. J. (2014). *Women in intercollegiate sport. A longitudinal, national study. Thirty-seven-year update. 1977-2014.*  
<http://www.acostacarpenter.org/2014%20Status%20of%20Women%20in%20Intercollegiate%20Sport%20-37%20Year%20Update%20-%201977-2014%20.pdf>
- Acosta, D. A., Lautenberger, D. M., Castillo-Page, L., & Skorton, D. J. (2020). Achieving gender equity is our responsibility: Leadership matters. *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(10), 1468–1471.  
<https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.00000000000003610>
- Adriaanse, J. (2017). Quotas to accelerate gender equity in sport leadership: Do they work? In L. J. Burton & S. Leberman (Eds.), *Women in sport leadership: Research and practice for change* (pp. 83-97). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542775-6>
- Alfaro, E., Vázquez, B., Gallardo J.M. & Ferro, F. (2013). Mujeres en puestos de responsabilidad dentro de las organizaciones públicas deportivas de la Comunidad de Madrid. *Ágora para la EF y Deporte*, 15(1), 40-53.
- Alfaro, E., Mayoral A., & Vázquez, B. (2018). *Seminario “Mujer y Deporte” INEF-Madrid. Factores que condicionan el acceso de las mujeres a los puestos de responsabilidad en el deporte. Consejo Superior de Deportes.* Subdirección General de Mujer y Deporte.  
<https://www.csd.gob.es/sites/default/files/media/files/2019-04/Factores%20%28NIPO%29.pdf>
- Allemand, I., Bedard, J.C., Brullebaut, B., & Deschênes, J. (2021). Role of old boys’ networks and regulatory approaches in selection processes for female directors. *British Journal of Management*, 33(2), 784-805. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12485>
- Anicha, C., Bilen-Green, C., & Green, R.A. (2020). A policy paradox: Why gender equity is men’s work. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29, 847 - 851.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1768363>
- Ansmann, L., Flickinger, T. E., Barelo, S., Kunneman, M., Mantwill, S., Quilligan, S., Zanini, C., & Aelbrecht, K. (2014). Career development for early career academics: Benefits of networking and the role of professional societies. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 97(1), 132–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2014.06.013>
- Anthony, M., & Soontiens, W. (2022). Reality checks for career women: An interpretivist paradigm. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 28(5), 1078–1099.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2019.42>
- Arbizu, FM. (Dir.) (2008). *La familia profesional de las actividades físicas y deportivas.* Ministerio de Educación, Política Social y Deporte, Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones. INCUAL, Consejo General de Deportes. CSD.  
[https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/la-familia-profesional-de-actividades-fisicas-y-deportivas\\_181758/](https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/la-familia-profesional-de-actividades-fisicas-y-deportivas_181758/)
- Azmat, G., & Boring, A. (2020). Gender diversity in firms. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 36(4), 760–782. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OXREP/GRAA043>
- Beaman, L., Keleher, N., & Magruder, J.R. (2018). Do job networks disadvantage women? Evidence from a recruitment experiment in Malawi. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 36(1), 121 - 157. <https://doi.org/10.1086/693869>

- Benn, T., Koushkie, M., & Koca, C. (2016). International developments in policy and practice for equity. In R. López de D'Amico, T. Benn, & G. Pfister (Eds.), *Girls and women in physical education, physical activity and sport* (pp. 18–31). Routledge.
- Bertrand, M. (2018). Coase Lecture – the Glass Ceiling. *Macroeconomics: Employment*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecca.12264>
- Best, D. (2019). The challenges of authenticity: Leadership as a lesbian. In M. McIntosh, H. Nicholas, & A. H. Huq (Eds.), *Leadership and diversity in psychology: Moving beyond the limits* (pp. 131–141). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429432606-11>
- Bjärsholm, D. (2018). Networking as a cornerstone within the practice of social entrepreneurship in sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 19(1), 120–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2018.1546753>
- Bleijenbergh, I. (2017). Transformational change towards gender equality: An autobiographical reflection on resistance during participatory action research, 25(1), 131 - 138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508417726547>
- Boned, C.J.; Felipe, J.L.; Barranco, D.; Grimaldi-Puyana, M. & Crovetto, M. (2015). Perfil profesional de los trabajadores de los centros de fitness en España / Professional profile of workers in Spanish fitness clubs. *Revista Internacional de Medicina y Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte*, 15(58), 195-210.
- Bonikowska, A., Drolet, M., & Fortin, N. M. (2019). Earnings inequality and the gender pay gap in Canada: The role of women's under-representation among top earners. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2019002-eng.htm>
- Burton, L.J. (2015). Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research. *Sport Management Review* 18(2), 155–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.02.004>
- Burton, L.J., & Leberman, S.I. (2017). An evaluation of current scholarship in sport leadership: Multilevel perspective. In L. Burton & S. Leberman (eds.), *Women in sport leadership: Research and practice for change* (pp. 16-32). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542775>
- Burton, L.J., & Newton, A.C. (2021). Organisation-level practices to support women in coaching. In L. Norman (ed.), *Improving gender equity in sports coaching*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003028642>
- Campillo-Sánchez, J., Segarra-Vicens, E., Morales-Baños, V., & Díaz-Suárez, A. (2021). Sport and Sustainable Development Goals in Spain. *Sustainability*, 13(6), 3505. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13063505>
- Campos-Izquierdo, A. (2011). Diseño y validación de la entrevista estandarizada por medio de cuestionario “PROAFIDE: recursos humanos de actividad física y deporte”. *Actividad Física y Deporte: Ciencia y Profesión*, 15, 53-62.
- Campos-Izquierdo, A. & González-Rivera, MD. (2010). Selección de los recursos humanos de la actividad física y del deporte en las empresas. *Dirección y Organización*, 41, 44-57.
- Campos-Izquierdo, A., González-Rivera, M.D. & Taks, M. (2016). Multi-Functionality and Occupations of Sport and Physical Activity Professionals in Spain, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 16(1),106-126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2015.1108990>
- Campos-Izquierdo, A. (2019). Ocupaciones, empleo y perfil de los Graduados en Ciencias de la Actividad Física y del Deporte en España. (Occupations, employment and profile of Graduates in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences in Spain). *Cultura, Ciencia Y Deporte*, 14(41), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.12800/ccd.v14i41.1271>

- Carter, P.A. (2016). From Single to Married: Feminist Teachers' Response to Family/Work Conflict in Early Twentieth-Century New York City. *History of Education Quarterly*, 56, 36–60.
- Cansino, C., Khanna, K., Johnson Bhembe, X., Overholser, B., Burstin, H. R., & Spector, N. D. (2021). The path forward: Using metrics to promote equitable work environments. *Pediatrics*, 148(Suppl 2), e2021051440G. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-051440G>
- Clayton-Hathway, K., & Fasbender, U. (2019). Women as leaders and managers in sports: Understanding key career enablers and constraints in the British horseracing industry. In *Women, Business and Leadership* (pp. 403–420). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786432711.00032>
- Commission of the European Communities (2007). *White paper on sport Brussels, 11.7.2007 COM(2007) 391 final*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0391>
- Council of the European Union (2024). Conclusions on gender equality in sport. *Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting Brussels, 20 May 2014*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28261/142712.pdf>
- Crenshaw, K., (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of anti-discrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1(8), 139–167.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Davern, M. and Hachen, D. (2006). The role of information and influence in social networks, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 65(2), 269-293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2006.00451.x>
- Ely, R. J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. M. (2011). Taking gender into account: Theory and design for women's leadership development programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(3), 474–493. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0046>
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2023). *Gender equality index: Spain in 2023 edition*. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/ES>
- European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (2022). *EOSE Activity Report 2022*. <https://www.eose.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/AR-2022-EOSE-WEB.pdf>
- European Union (2017). *Summary of white paper on sport (COM(2007) 391 final)*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/white-paper-on-sport.html>
- Eurostat (2024). *Employment in sport*. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=598841>
- Evans, A. B., & Pfister, G. U. (2021). Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 56(3), 317-342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220911842>
- Farrell, H. (2018). The shared challenges of institutional theories: Rational choice, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism. In J. Glückler, R. Suddaby, R. & R. Lenz (Eds.) *Knowledge and Institutions. Knowledge and Institutions* (pp. 23–44). Springer- [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75328-7\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75328-7_2)



- Fatima, J. (2024). Peculiarities of employment of women in non-governmental non-profit organizations in Jizzakh region. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Fundamentals*, 4(4), 32–27. <https://doi.org/10.55640/jsshrf-04-04-07>
- Fernandez, R.M., & Rubineau, B. (2019). Network recruitment and the glass ceiling: Evidence from two firms. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5(3), 88-102. <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2019.5.3.05>
- Foppiano-Vilo, G. Matus-Castillo, C. & Cornejo-Améstica, M. (2022). Barreras, facilitadores y estrategias que influyen en la participación femenina en juntas directivas de federaciones deportivas chilenas. *Retos*, 44, 34-44.
- Forret, M. (2006). The impact of social networks on the advancement of women and racial/ethnic minority groups, in M. F. Karsten (ed.), *Gender, ethnicity, and race in the workplace*, 3, Praeger/Greenwood, pp. 149-166.
- Forret, M. and Dougherty, T. (2004). Networking behaviors and career outcomes: Differences for men and women?, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 419-437. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.253>
- Gartzia, L., Amillano, A., & Baniandrés, J. (2016). Women in industrial relations: Overcoming gender biases. In P. Elgoibar, M. Euwema, & L. Munduate (Eds.), *Building trust and constructive conflict management in organizations* (pp. 195–211). Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31475-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31475-4_12)
- Godfrey, C., Harrison, M.B., Graham, I.D., & Ross-White, A. (2010). Utilisation of theoretical models and frameworks in the process of evidence synthesis. *International Journal of Evidence-based Healthcare*, 8(18), 730-751. <https://doi.org/10.11124/01938924-201008180-00001>
- González-Rivera, M.D. (2016). Latin American women and sport in Spain. In R. López, T. Benn. y G. Pfister. *Women and Sport in Latin America* (pp. 213-225). Routledge.
- González-Rivera, M. D., Campos-Izquierdo, A., Villalba, A. I., & Hall, N. D. (2017). Sources of knowledge used by Spanish coaches: A study according to competition level, gender and professional experience. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 12(2), 162-174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1747954117694733>
- González-Rivera, M.D., & Álvarez-Llargo, N. (2023). Mujer, educación física y deporte en España. In R. López de D'Amico, R., Ozols, M. & M.D. González-Rivera (Eds.) *Mujer, Educación Física y Deporte en Ibero-América*, (pp. 65-95). Editorial Kinesis.
- Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin, K., & Suddaby, R. (2008). *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism*. Sage.
- Greguletz, E., Diehl, M., & Kreutzer, K. (2018). Why women build less effective networks than men: The role of structural exclusion and personal hesitation. *Human Relations*, 72(7), 1234 - 1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718804303>
- Guinto, M. L; Lasat-Uy, G., & Cantancio, M.F. (2021). Women in Philippine sport and physical education. In R. López De D'Amico, M. Koushkie, & M.L. Guinto (Eds.). *Women and Sport in Asia* (pp.157-167). Routledge.
- Gupta, V.K., Turban, D.B., Wasti, S.A., & Sikdar, A. (2009). The role of gender stereotypes in perceptions of entrepreneurs and intentions to become an entrepreneur. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(2), 397–417. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00296.x>
- Gupta, V.K., Turban, D.B., & Bhawe, N. (2008). The effect of gender stereotype activation on entrepreneurial intentions. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(5), 1053-1061. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.5.1053>

- Hamilton, E. (2013). The discourse of entrepreneurial masculinities (and femininities). *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 25(1-2), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2012.746879>
- Hamzeh, N. (2023) Female leaders and distributed leadership: What can women bring to the table?. *Open Journal of Leadership*, 12, 15-28. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2023.121002>.
- Henriquez-Caballero, M.P. (2024). SS18-01 tools for managing violence and harassment at work with a gender approach: An empirical analysis. *Occupational Medicine*, 74(Supplement 1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqae023.0133>
- Henry, S. K., Sandler, J., Passerini, L., & Darmstadt, G. L. (2017). Taking on the gender challenge in organisations: What does it take?. *Global Public Health*, 12(7), 846–857. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2015.1094110>
- Holmqvist, M., & Lantz Ekström, M. (2024). A systematic review of research on educational superintendents. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2307142>
- Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 764–791. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2667055>
- Ibarra, H. & Petriglieri, J. (2016). Impossible selves: Image strategies and identity threat in professional women's career transitions, *INSEAD working paper no. 2016/12/OBH*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2742061>
- International Working Group (2014). *Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration on Women and Sport. Adopted during the 6th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport in Helsinki, Finland from June 12-15*. <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Brighton-plus-Helsinki-2014-Declaration-on-Women-and-Sport.pdf>
- Ivancheva, M., Lynch, K., & Keating, K. (2019). Precarity, gender and care in the neoliberal academy. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 26(4), 448-462. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12350>
- Jakobsen, M. (2014). [Review of the book *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities*, by W. Richard Scott]. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 32(2). 136-138. <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v32i2.4764>
- Joseph, L.J. & Anderson, E. (2016). The influence of gender segregation and team sport experience on occupational discrimination in sport-based employment. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 25(5), 586-598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2015.1070712>
- Kane, M. J., & LaVoi, N. (2018). An examination of intercollegiate athletic directors' attributions regarding the underrepresentation of female coaches in women's sports. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal*, 26, 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1123/wspaj.2016-0031>
- Kavoura, A., & Kokkonen, M. (2021). What do we know about the sporting experiences of gender and sexual minority athletes and coaches? A scoping review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 14(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2020.1723123>
- Kelleher, F., Severin, F. O., Samson, M., De, A., Afamasaga-Wright, T., & Sedere, U. M. (2011). *Women and the teaching profession: Exploring the feminisation debate*. UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.14217/9781848591264-en>

- Khasanah, U., & Firmansyah, F. (2024). Labor supply analysis: Case study of married women workers. *Economics Development Analysis Journal*, 13(2), 151-167. <https://doi.org/10.15294/edaj.v13i2.78969>
- Knoppers, A., Spaaij, R., & Claringbould, I. (2021). Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport governance: Sport as a unique field? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 13(3), 517–529. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2021.1915848>
- Kubayi, N.A., Coopoo, Y., & Morris-Eyton, H.F. (2017). Work-related constraints in sports coaching: Perceptions of South African female coaches. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 12(1), 103-108.
- Lalanne, M., & Seabright, P. (2016). The old boy network: The impact of professional networks on remuneration in top executive jobs. *Econometric Modeling: Macroeconomics eJournal*. SAFE Working Paper No. 123, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2717988>
- Law 6/2016, of 24 November, *Regulating the practice of sporting activities in the Community of Madrid*. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2017/BOE-A-2017-3069-consolidado.pdf>
- Lee, E. Y., Airton, L., Lim, H., & Jung, E. (2023). An urgent need for quantitative intersectionality in physical activity and health research. *Journal of Physical Activity & Health*, 20(2), 97–99. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2022-0639>
- Lim, H., Jung, E., Jodoin, K., Du, X., Airton, L., & Lee, E. Y. (2021). Operationalization of intersectionality in physical activity and sport research: A systematic scoping review. *SSM - population health*, 14, 100808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100808>
- López de D'Amico, R., Koushkie, M. & Guinto, M.L.M. (Eds.) (2021). *Women and sport in Asia*. Routledge.
- López de D'Amico, R. & González-Rivera, M.D. (2021). International developments in policy for equity: Girls and women in physical education and sport. In R. López de D'Amico, M. Koushkie & M.L. Guinto (Eds). *Women and sport in Asia* (pp. 7-14). Routledge.
- Luthi, K. (2023). Career advancement of women in engineering disciplines at two-year degree institutions: Documenting challenges and potential solutions to raise inclusivity. *2022 ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.18260/1-2--40561>
- Madsen, S. R., Townsend, A., & Scribner, R. T. (2020). Strategies that male allies use to advance women in the workplace. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 28(3), 239-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826519883239>
- Manca, P., Gutiérrez, A., & Arroyo, A. (Coords.) (2020). *Termómetro del ecosistema del deporte en España*. PwC España, Fundación España Activa. <https://www.pwc.es/es/entretenimiento-medios/assets/informe-termometro-ecosistema-deporte-espana.pdf>
- Maranto, R., Carroll, K., Cheng, A., & Teodoro, M. P. (2018). Boys will be superintendents: School leadership as a gendered profession. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(2), 12–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718803563>
- Melton, E. N., & Bryant, M. J. (2017). Intersectionality: The impact of negotiating multiple identities for women in sport leadership. In E. N. Melton & M. J. Bryant (eds), *Women in sport leadership* (pp. 62-82). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542775-5>
- Mengel, F. (2020). Gender differences in networking, *The Economic Journal*, 130(630), 1842–1873, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueaa035>
- Moodly, A.L., & Toni, N. (2017). Accessing higher education leadership: Towards a framework for women's professional development. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 31(3) 138-153. <https://doi.org/10.20853/31-3-917>

- Moreau, M.-P. (2018). *Teachers, gender and the feminisation debate* (1st ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315201436>
- Nash, M., Grant, R., Moore, R., & Winzenberg, T. (2021). Male allyship in institutional STEM gender equity initiatives. *PLoS ONE*, *16*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0248373>
- National Council of Spain (2005). *Instalaciones Deportivas de la Comunidad de Madrid. Censo Nacional de Instalaciones Deportivas 2005. Consejo Superior de Deportes*.  
<https://www.csd.gob.es/sites/default/files/media/files/2018-10/publicaciones-censo-2005-madrid.pdf>
- National Statistics Institute (INE, 2023). *Madrid: Población por municipios y sexo*.<https://ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=2881>
- Njoki, W. (2021). Gender discrimination in the workplace. *Journal of Gender Related Studies*, *2*(2), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.47941/jgrs.744>
- Nyamubi, G. J. (2017). Determinants of secondary school teachers' job satisfaction in Tanzania. *Education Research International*, *2017*(1), 7282614. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/7282614>
- OECD (2019), *Government at a Glance 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris.  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/8ccf5c38-en>.
- 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>
- Patil, S., & Doherty, A. (2023). Capacity for gender equity initiatives: A multiple case study investigation of national sport organisations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *15*(2), 271–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2023.2201293>
- Piggott, L. V. (2021). "Chapter 12: Gender and social inequity in and through sport leadership". In *Research handbook on sports and society*. Edward Elgar Publishing.  
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789903607.00020>
- Pippos, A. (2017). "This is a man's world." In A. Pippos (ed.) *Breaking the mould: Taking a hammer to sexism in sport* (pp. 25-41). Affirm Press.
- Profeta, P. (2020). From public policy to gender equality: Theory and evidence. In *Gender equality and public policy: Measuring progress in Europe* (pp. 37–57). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108525886.004>
- Raile, A.N., Kwapisz, A., Bratton, V.K., Leary, M., Aytes, K., Black, L.J., & Bryant, S.E. (2022). Business as usual is not working for women in business schools: Student perceptions of business people and entrepreneurs. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *31*(5), 2095-2112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12919>
- Robertson, J., Dowling, M., Washington, M., Leopkey, B., Lee Ellis, D., & Smith, L. (2022). Institutional theory in sport: A scoping review. *Journal of Sport Management*, *36*(5). 459-472. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2021-0179>
- Rodríguez-Osuna, J. (2002). La muestra: Teoría y aplicación. In F. Alvira, M. García Ferrando & J. Ibáñez (Comps.), *El análisis de la realidad social. Métodos y técnicas de investigación* (ed. 3ª) (pp. 445-482). Alianza editorial.
- Ryan, I., & Dickson, G. (2018). The invisible norm: An exploration of the intersections of sport, gender and leadership. *Leadership*, *14*(3), 329-346.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715016674864>

- Sahito, Z., & Vaisanen, P. (2020). A literature review on teachers' job satisfaction in developing countries: Recommendations and solutions for the enhancement of the job. *Review of Education*, 8(1), 3-34. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3159>
- Sotiriadou, P., & de Haan, D. (2019). Women and leadership: Advancing gender equity policies in sport leadership through sport governance. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(3), 365–383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2019.1577902>
- Scott, W. R. (2014). *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities* (4th ed.). Sage Publishing.
- Shamloo, S. E., De Cristofaro, V., Pellegrini, V., & Salvati, M. (2022). Masculinity and leadership effectiveness (self-)perceptions: The case of lesbian leaders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(24), 17026. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192417026>
- Sharafizad, F., Brown, K., Jogulu, U., Omari, M., & Gander, M. (2024). The holding pattern of the worker Bs: How bifurcation of consciousness impacts female academic career progression. *Career Development International*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/JMO.2019.42>
- Simmie, G. M. (2023). The gendered construction of teachers' identities and practices: Feminist critical discourse analysis of policy texts in Ireland. *Gender and Education*, 35(3), 282-298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2023.2167944>
- Socratous, M. (2018). Networking: a male dominated game. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 33(2), 167-183. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-11-2016-0181>
- Solanas, J., Hinojosa-Alcalde, I., Vilanova, A., & Soler, S. (2022). Is sport coaching a social sustainable profession for women? Analysing the experiences of women coaches in Spain. *Sustainability*, 14(13), 7846. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14137846>
- Soler, S., Prat, M.T., Puig, N., & Flintoff, A. (2017). Implementing gender equity policies in a university sport organization: Competing discourses from enthusiasm to resistance. *Quest*, 69(2), 276-289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1226186>
- Sone, M., Altenburg, T. M., & ChinAPaw, M. J. (2024). Challenges and future directions for promoting intersectional quantitative studies in physical activity research. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 21(12), 1223-1226. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2024-0480>
- Sotiriadou, P., & de Haan, D. (2019). Women and leadership: Advancing gender equity policies in sport leadership through sport governance. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(3), 365-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2019.1577902>
- Spoor, J.R., & Hoye, R. (2014). Perceived support and women's intentions to stay at a sport organization. *INTL: Other Global Business Issues (Topic)*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12018>
- Stamarski, C. S., & Son Hing, L. S. (2015). Gender inequalities in the workplace: The effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, Article 1400. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400>
- Steinfeld, L.A., & Scott, L.M. (2018). The global view of gender discrimination in business. In S. M. Adams (ed.), *Time for solutions!: Overcoming gender-related career barriers*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351131674>
- Stephenson, E. (2020). Invisible while visible: an Australian perspective on queer women leaders in international affairs. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 3(3), 427-443. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510820X15880614774555>

- Sullivan, Lauren. (2022). Breaking the cultural cycle of sexual harassment in the professional sports industry: Time to step up prevention & punishment. *Saint Louis University Law Journal*, 66(3), 637-iv. <https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/lj/vol66/iss3/10>
- SyedSalleh, S. N., & Mansor, N. (2022). Women and labour force participation in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 7(7), e001641. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i7.1641>
- Tarbutton, T. (2019). The leadership gap in education. *Multicultural Education*, 27, 19-21.
- Terjesen, S.A., & Sealy, R. (2016). Board gender quotas: Exploring ethical tensions from a multi-theoretical perspective. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 26, 23-65. <https://doi.org/10.1017/BEQ.2016.7>
- Thébaud, S. (2010). Gender and entrepreneurship as a career choice. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 73(3), 288-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272510377882>
- Valiente, C. (2020). The impact of gender quotas in sport management: The case of Spain. *Sport in Society*, pp. 25, 1017–1034. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1819244>
- Van Damme, D. (2017). Why do so many women want to become teachers? OECD. <https://oecdeditoday.com/why-do-so-many-women-want-to-become-teachers/>
- van Emmerik, I. (2006). Gender differences in the creation of different types of social capital: A multilevel study, *Social Networks*, 28(1), 24-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2005.04.002>
- Viñas, J. & Vilanova, A. (Dir.) (2014). *El mercat de treball en el context de l'esport a Catalunya. Especial incidència a la província de Barcelona*. Editorial INDE y Institut Nacional d'Educació Física de Catalunya. Observatori Català de l'Esport. Editorial INDE <https://www.diba.cat/documents/41289/72096001/Mercat+de+treball+esport.pdf/73876ac2-754d-483e-9801-b03dc38f061e>
- Walker, N. A., Schaeperkoetter, C., & Darvin, L. (2017). Institutionalized practices in sport leadership. In L. Burton & S. Leberman (eds.), *Women in sport leadership: Research and practice for change* (pp. 33-46). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542775>
- Wanigasekara, W.A. (2016). Women's networking and career development: A systematic analysis of the literature. *International Journal of Biometrics*, 11(11), 231-231. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v11n11p231>
- Wasend, M., & LaVoi, N. M. (2019). Are women coached by women more likely to become sport coaches? Head coach gender and female collegiate athletes' entry into the coaching profession. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 27(2), 85-93. <https://doi.org/10.1123/wspaj.2018-0043>
- Weinkopf, C. (2014). Women's employment in Germany robust in crisis but vulnerable in job quality. *Revue De L'ofce*, 133, 189-214. <https://doi.org/10.3917/REOF.133.0189>
- Weis, L., & Lay, A. (2019). Gender-specific networking: Mind the gap. In A-S. Antoniou, C. Cooper & C. Gatrell (eds.), *Women, Business and Leadership* (pp. 174-198). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786432711.00018>
- Woehler, M. L., Cullen-Lester, K. L., Porter, C. M., & Frear, K. A. (2021). Whether, how, and why networks influence men's and women's career success: Review and research agenda. *Journal of Management*, 47(1), 207-236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320960529>
- Wynn, A.T., & Correll, S.J. (2018). Combating gender bias in modern workplaces. In B. Risman, C. Froyum, & W. Scarborough, (eds.) *Handbook of the sociology of gender* (pp. 509-521). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76333-0\\_37](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76333-0_37)



- Young, D., Block, K., & Gibbs, L. (2024). Developing social capital through sport? The case for an intersectional lens. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902241278743>
- Zdroik, J. & Babiak, K. (2017), "Networking with a purpose: Men and women's perception of career networking in sport NGBs", *Sport, Business and Management*, 7(3), 234-257. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-11-2015-0036>