

Strategies for Advancing Women's Participation and Leadership in Nigerian Sport Management: Challenges, Interventions, and Future Pathways

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Abstract- *Despite the growing global emphasis on gender equity in sport, Nigerian sport management remains male-dominated, particularly in leadership roles. This paper critically examines the structural, cultural, and institutional barriers limiting women's participation and advancement within the sport management sector in Nigeria. Drawing on intersectional feminist theory and sport development frameworks, the study analyses policy documents, stakeholder interviews, and media content to assess current practices and identify gaps. It further explores successful strategies from comparable Global South contexts and evaluates their applicability in Nigeria. Key recommendations include policy reform, targeted mentorship programmes, gender-sensitive recruitment and leadership pipelines, and strategic collaborations with NGOs and international sport bodies. The paper concludes by proposing a context-driven, multi-stakeholder model for fostering inclusive sport leadership in Nigeria. The findings have implications for sport federations, education providers, and policymakers committed to sustainable gender inclusion in African sport ecosystems.*

Indexed Terms- *Women in Sport, Sport Leadership, Gender Equity, Nigerian Sport Management, Female Participation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite notable progress in gender equality across various professional domains, sport management remains a male-dominated field globally, with women consistently underrepresented in leadership roles [1]. This gender disparity is particularly pronounced in many Global South contexts, where

cultural norms, institutional barriers, and limited support mechanisms continue to hinder women's advancement in sport leadership [2]. Within the Nigerian context, women's participation in sport, whether as athletes, coaches, administrators, or policymakers faces systemic challenges that reflect broader societal inequalities [3,4]. While Nigerian women have made strides on the field, their presence in decision-making positions remains disproportionately low.

Women's inclusion in sport leadership is not merely an equity issue it is essential for fostering inclusive, effective, and socially responsive sport systems. Research shows that gender-diverse leadership teams contribute to better organizational outcomes, more holistic policy-making, and improved advocacy for gender-sensitive programming [5, 6]. Beyond organizational gains, women's active participation in sport governance can challenge patriarchal narratives, inspire younger generations, and expand the cultural meanings of leadership and excellence in sport [7, 8]. This paper focuses specifically on Nigeria due to its rich sporting culture, complex gender dynamics, and the urgent need for structural transformation in sport governance. Despite the existence of national policies such as the Nigeria Sports Policy [9] and global frameworks like the IOC Gender Equality Review Project [10] and Beijing Declaration [11], implementation gaps persist. These realities underscore the importance of interrogating both the barriers and the enabling factors affecting women's leadership in Nigerian sport management.

The aim of this paper is to critically explore the challenges women face in attaining leadership roles within Nigerian sport institutions, examine existing interventions and policies aimed at addressing gender inequities, and propose forward-looking strategies for

meaningful and sustainable change. The paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews relevant literature on global and local gender disparities in sport leadership. This is followed by an analysis of empirical findings and policy interventions in Nigeria. The final sections outline proposed strategic pathways and conclude with implications for policy, practice, and future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of gender disparities in sport leadership has drawn increasing scholarly attention globally. A range of studies highlights the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles, despite their increasing participation as athletes and stakeholders [12]. Scholars argue that this imbalance stems from entrenched structural, cultural, and institutional barriers that define sport leadership as a predominantly male domain [13,14].

In Nigeria, the landscape is similarly gendered, with minimal representation of women in leadership positions within sport federations, coaching, and administrative bodies. [3, 4] Cultural expectations, lack of mentorship, and male-dominated selection processes inhibit women's advancement in sport management. [15] underscore the perception-based barriers that link leadership competence with masculinity, while [9] identify systemic policy failures and media marginalisation as compounding factors.

The literature also documents global and regional interventions aimed at addressing this gap. The International Olympic Committee's Gender Equality Review Project [10] and the UN's Beijing Platform for Action[11] have catalyzed national-level reforms, including targeted leadership training, quotas, and inclusive hiring policies. [1] notes that quotas can yield positive outcomes when accompanied by structural support, while [6] role congruity theory provides a psychological explanation for the prejudices against female leaders in masculine-coded contexts.

Scholarship further reveals that the pathway to leadership for women often requires active mentoring and community support. [3, 16] recommend

mentorship models that empower women through skill acquisition and network building. Studies from Rwanda [17] and Bangladesh [18] provide comparative insights into culturally sensitive strategies that can inform the Nigerian context.

Other research focuses on the personal and professional experiences of women navigating sport leadership. [8] documents feelings of marginalisation and professional isolation among elite female coaches, echoed by [7] who offers an Ecological-Intersectional Model to understand these challenges holistically. [5,19] stress that promoting diversity requires both organisational change and leadership accountability.

Scholars like [21, 22] highlight the role of media and public discourse in reinforcing gender stereotypes. This is pertinent in Nigeria, where cultural narratives often undermine female authority in sport settings. The Women's Sports Foundation [22, 23] also identifies early socialisation, lack of role models, and minimal institutional investment as barriers to women's sport participation and leadership.

Together, these studies underscore the multifaceted nature of gender inequality in sport leadership and affirm the need for strategic, context-specific interventions. This paper contributes to that conversation by focusing on the Nigerian case, drawing from global best practices while addressing indigenous barriers to gender equity in sport management.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the underrepresentation of women in sport management in Nigeria requires a robust theoretical grounding that reflects the multidimensional nature of gender-based barriers and enablers. This section draws on three key frameworks: Liberal Feminism, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Intersectionality to explore how gender influences participation and leadership trajectories in Nigerian sport management.

Liberal Feminism provides a foundational lens for analyzing structural inequalities that restrict women's access to leadership roles. Rooted in the belief that

women should have the same legal and institutional opportunities as men, liberal feminism critiques policies and practices that inadvertently perpetuate discrimination in sports institutions [1, 22]. In Nigeria, despite policy efforts such as the National Sports Policy and international gender equity frameworks [11, 10], systemic exclusion remains entrenched. The theory highlights the need for policy reforms, mentorship programs, and equal access to resources [3, 4].

Transformational Leadership Theory offers insights into the value women can bring to leadership roles. It emphasizes visionary, ethical, and empathetic leadership traits often associated with effective female leaders [6]. This framework is particularly useful in sports settings where leadership traditionally rewards masculine, authoritarian traits [13]. Research shows that female leaders who adopt transformational leadership styles can foster inclusive team cultures, enhance performance, and drive institutional change [14]. However, cultural and institutional biases in Nigeria often delegitimize these leadership styles, framing them as signs of weakness rather than strength.

Intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, captures how overlapping social identities such as gender, ethnicity, class, and age compound experiences of marginalization. In Nigeria, women in sport leadership are not a homogenous group. Ethnic background, regional disparity, and religion intersect to shape unique experiences and access to opportunities [15, 24]. For instance, Muslim women in northern Nigeria may face cultural restrictions that are absent for women in southern urban centres. Intersectionality thus allows a deeper understanding of the varied pathways and hurdles faced by aspiring female sport leaders.

Together, these frameworks reveal the complexity of advancing women's leadership in sport. They illuminate how institutional structures (liberal feminism), leadership values (transformational theory), and social identities (intersectionality) interact to sustain or challenge gender inequality. Applying them to the Nigerian context enables a culturally informed and socially nuanced

interpretation of both the barriers to, and strategies for, achieving gender-inclusive sport management.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a desk-based qualitative research design, specifically a critical narrative literature review, to explore the persistent gender disparities in sport management in Nigeria and to propose strategies for enhancing women's participation and leadership. This method is well-suited for analyzing a broad range of existing data sources, identifying thematic patterns, and offering an interpretive synthesis grounded in theoretical and contextual understanding.

Data Sources: This study adopts a desk-based, qualitative approach relying on secondary data from academic literature, policy documents, and sectoral reports. The primary sources of data were peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and institutional reports relevant to gender participation and leadership in Nigerian sport management. The inclusion criteria were: (i) relevance to the Nigerian sport context, (ii) explicit focus on women's participation, leadership, or gender-based challenges and interventions, and (iii) published between 1980 and 2024 in reputable academic or policy platforms. Both historical and contemporary sources were considered to allow for longitudinal insight into trends, persistent barriers, and evolving strategies.

To ensure the rigour of the analysis, a thematic critical appraisal of selected literature was conducted. Each article was assessed based on its methodological approach, the clarity and relevance of its findings, and its contribution to one or more of the core themes of this study: structural and socio-cultural barriers, policy and institutional responses, visibility and representation, and strategic pathways for change.

For instance, [3, 25] employed qualitative methods, including interviews and case studies, to reveal the systemic exclusion of women in sport leadership and advocate for capacity-building and mentorship. Quantitative studies such as [15, 26, 27] provided empirical evidence on the roles of education, socioeconomic status, and institutional support in

influencing female participation. Meanwhile, critical discourse and policy analyses [4, 9] exposed patterns of media bias and the potential of aligning sport policy with global commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals.

This appraisal process enabled the identification of recurring patterns, gaps in the literature, and emerging best practices. It also ensured that only high-quality, thematically relevant literature informed the synthesis and analytical framework of the study. The insights derived from this process form the basis of the discussion and recommendations chapters.

Analytical Strategy: The study employed thematic content analysis to extract key insights from the literature. The process involved coding for recurrent themes, such as structural barriers, cultural norms, institutional policies, mentorship gaps, and leadership styles. These themes were then critically analyzed in relation to the theoretical frameworks Liberal Feminism, Transformational Leadership, and Intersectionality discussed earlier.

Limitations: While a desk-based approach allows for a wide-ranging exploration of existing knowledge, it does not capture primary data from current actors in the Nigerian sport management field. This limits the ability to validate findings through lived experience. Additionally, literature on Nigerian women in sport leadership remains somewhat sparse and fragmented, which may affect the comprehensiveness of the review. However, the study mitigates this by drawing from parallel contexts and incorporating theoretical perspectives to enrich interpretation and recommendations.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Current Landscape of Women's Participation in Nigerian Sport Management: Recent evidence confirms persistent gender disparities in Nigeria's sport management sector. Quantitative surveys by [15, 26] indicate that women continue to be underrepresented in both participation and leadership roles, largely due to limited institutional support and unequal access to education. Performance-based studies such as [27] further highlight disparities in outcomes across sports disciplines, emphasizing the

urgent need for equitable resource distribution and gender-sensitive training practices.

Organizational structures also appear to reinforce exclusion. [24] finds that decision-making within most sport organizations remains dominated by men, with women often systematically excluded. [26] supports this claim by identifying federal educational institutions as either facilitators or inhibitors of recreational sport access, especially for women. On a broader scale, [4] discuss how institutions such as the Ministry of Sports and State Sports Councils can be repositioned as agents of gender-inclusive transformation, especially in pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cultural and societal expectations remain a strong deterrent to women's sport participation. [29, 30] reveal how entrenched beliefs about gender roles, along with religious and family pressures, discourage women from engaging in sports. [31] deepens this insight by showing that such marginalization is embedded within African social systems, where women's bodies are often objectified or seen as less capable than men's in the athletic sphere.

Despite global advances in gender equality, recent empirical and theoretical studies confirm that women in Nigeria remain significantly underrepresented in sport management and leadership. Quantitative research by [15, 26] reveals a clear pattern of limited female participation in both competitive sports and decision-making roles. These studies identify key structural barriers, including unequal access to institutional support and education, which are foundational to sport leadership pipelines. Similarly, [27] underscore performance disparities between men and women across select sports, calling attention to unequal training, coaching, and resource allocation. This mirrors findings from [12], who argue that equity must extend beyond participation to ensure fairness in preparation and performance.

Organizational exclusion remains a persistent theme. [24] reports that male dominance in Nigerian sport organizations is entrenched, with women often excluded from decision-making circles. His findings align with global research, such as [6] Role Congruity Theory, which suggests that traditional

gender stereotypes position women as less suited to leadership roles, reinforcing structural exclusion. [26] adds that educational institutions, particularly federal colleges, either support or hinder female engagement based on their policies and infrastructure. These institutional dynamics echo international scholarship [6, 19] describe how male-dominated organizational cultures resist gender diversification.

Policy-level and structural levers for change are emerging. [4] argue that governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Sports and State Sports Councils, hold latent potential to foster gender-inclusive leadership. They advocate for alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the opportunity for Nigeria to use sport as a platform for advancing gender equality. This view is consistent with [1] who finds that policy mechanisms like quotas can be effective when implemented alongside cultural shifts.

Cultural and societal expectations continue to shape participation patterns. [28, 29] provide long-standing evidence that family expectations, religious doctrines, and entrenched gender roles dissuade female participation in sports. [17, 31] further contextualize these barriers within African societies, where women's athleticism is often dismissed or stigmatized. [24] similarly argue that societal norms act as invisible gatekeepers, narrowing leadership pathways for women.

Furthermore, comparative studies reinforce that Nigeria is not unique in these challenges. [18] note parallel cultural constraints in Bangladesh, while [32] demonstrate how global sport-for-development initiatives must adapt to local norms to effectively engage girls and women. Thus, Nigeria's situation reflects a broader global struggle but is complicated by localized structural and cultural dynamics that demand targeted solutions.

While empirical data and theoretical analysis both point to critical gaps in women's participation and leadership within Nigerian sport management, the literature also identifies levers for transformation. These include institutional reforms, gender-sensitive policy design, and community-level education and advocacy. However, without addressing the interplay

between cultural norms and institutional structures, progress is likely to remain incremental and uneven.

Table 1: Current Landscape of Women's Participation in Nigerian Sport Management

Main Theme	Subthemes	Summary of Contributions
Persistent Gender Disparities in Nigeria's Sport Management Sector	Underrepresentation in Participation and Leadership [15, 26]	Quantitative studies revealing low female participation and leadership in sports, attributing disparities to limited institutional support and unequal access to education.
	Performance and Outcome Inequities [27]	Highlights uneven outcomes across sports disciplines; emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive training and equitable resource distribution.
	Gendered Organizational Structures [25, 27]	Omotosho shows male-dominated decision-making structures that systematically exclude women; Balogun identifies educational institutions as critical in enabling or obstructing women's access to sports.
	Institutional Transformation for Gender Inclusion [4]	Advocates for repositioning Ministries and Sports Councils as vehicles for promoting gender equity in line with the SDGs.

	Cultural and Societal Barriers [29, 30, 31]	Towobola and Anyanwu discuss how traditional gender roles, religion, and family discourage women's participation; Shehu contextualizes marginalization within African patriarchal and objectifying social systems.
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Key Challenges: A major obstacle identified across several studies is the influence of socio-cultural norms. [29, 31] both highlight the powerful role that traditional expectations play in deterring female participation in sports, particularly in conservative or rural communities. These expectations are further reinforced by institutional neglect. [25, 16] observe that policies on gender inclusion exist but are rarely enforced, while structural exclusion within sport bodies remains a norm.

The lack of mentorship and institutional support compounds the issue. [15] report that access to leadership roles is often mediated by availability of mentorship and advocacy, yet few women receive such support. [3] emphasizes mentorship as a crucial factor in accelerating women's advancement into sport leadership positions. Economic barriers also pose a significant limitation. [27] finds that women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately affected due to underfunded infrastructure and lack of recreational opportunities.

Gender bias in media representation constitutes another critical challenge. [32,33] demonstrate that media houses prioritize coverage of male athletes, thereby restricting the visibility, sponsorship, and public support available to female athletes. [26] also notes that rural girls face additional challenges, such as inadequate facilities, poor transportation, and minimal encouragement, which collectively restrict their sports engagement from an early age.

A persistent barrier to women's advancement in Nigerian sport management is the deep entrenchment of socio-cultural norms. [29, 31] provide strong evidence that traditional gender expectations particularly within rural and conservative communities continue to frame sport as a predominantly male activity. These cultural constructs are further reinforced by religious beliefs and familial pressures that discourage girls and women from active participation in physical activities. [18, 24] offer similar findings from Bangladesh and among ethnic African female student-athletes, respectively, illustrating how intersecting cultural and identity-related factors restrict women's opportunities across diverse contexts.

Institutional neglect reinforces these social constraints. [25, 16] critique Nigerian sport institutions for failing to implement gender inclusion policies meaningfully. While formal policy frameworks may exist, they often remain symbolic due to a lack of enforcement. This systemic inertia aligns with [6] Role Congruity Theory, which posits that leadership is frequently associated with masculine traits, thereby marginalizing women in such roles. The problem is not unique to Nigeria; [19] highlight similar organizational biases in European and global sport institutions.

A related concern is the inadequate availability of mentorship and advocacy opportunities for aspiring female sport leaders. [15] stress that mentorship facilitates women's progression into leadership roles, and [3] demonstrates the positive outcomes of structured mentoring programs in Nigeria. However, support systems are inconsistently applied, with many women navigating professional pathways without formal guidance. [7] Ecological-Intersectional Model supports the argument that interventions must address multiple layers of identity, including gender, class, and location, to be effective.

Economic inequities also compound the issue. [27] shows that women from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds face a dual challenge: a lack of personal financial resources and insufficient community-level infrastructure. Without access to safe, nearby sporting environments, many are unable

to participate or progress. [17] makes a parallel argument in the Rwandan context, suggesting that national sport development must be grounded in equity-driven investment strategies.

Media representation presents another entrenched challenge. [9] show that Nigerian media disproportionately favor male athletes, leading to poor visibility for women in sport. [13, 33] further demonstrate that media discourse often reinforces gender stereotypes, devaluing women's achievements and leadership potential. [19] argue that these portrayals have downstream effects, influencing public perception, sponsorship, and long-term engagement.

Intersectionality deepens the challenge for marginalized subgroups, such as rural women or those with disabilities. [26] documents how infrastructural deficits and cultural stigmas in Sokoto State hinder participation by young girls. The Women's Sports Foundation [23] advocates for interventions that go beyond a one-size-fits-all model by integrating considerations of race, geography, ability, and social class.

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the barriers Nigerian women face in sport management are multifaceted and interconnected. Cultural attitudes, institutional inertia, lack of mentorship, economic disparity, biased media, and intersectional disadvantages all coalesce to create a structurally unequal landscape. Without comprehensive, sustained, and inclusive reforms, the promise of gender equity in Nigerian sport will remain unrealized.

Table 2: Key challenges

Main Theme	Subthemes	Summary of Contributions
Key Challenges Facing Women in Nigeria's Sport Sector	Socio-Cultural Norms and Traditional Expectations [29,31]	Both authors reveal how cultural beliefs and traditional gender roles, especially in rural and conservative areas, significantly deter female participation in sports.
	Institutional Neglect and Policy Non-Enforcement [25, 16]	Existing gender-inclusive policies are rarely enforced; structural exclusion within sport organizations is persistent and normalized.
	Lack of Mentorship and Advocacy [15, 3]	Ngwakwe et al. show that leadership access often depends on mentorship; Ofili emphasizes mentorship as key to accelerating women's progress in sport leadership.
	Economic Barriers and Infrastructure Deficits [27]	Economic hardship, poor recreational infrastructure, and limited access to resources disproportionately affect women, especially those from lower-income backgrounds.
	Media Bias and Underrepresentation [9, 33]	Media coverage favors male athletes, limiting female athletes' visibility, sponsorships, and

		public support.
	Rural Disadvantage and Structural Constraints [26]	Rural girls face additional hurdles such as poor facilities, lack of transportation, and minimal encouragement, which collectively reduce their engagement in sports from an early age.

Some interventions are beginning to reshape the landscape. [4] document efforts to align national sport policy with global commitments like the SDGs, aiming to promote equity and inclusion through structured mobilization. [3] offers mentorship as a cost-effective yet impactful strategy to elevate women's leadership potential within the sports sector. At the institutional level, [29] advocates for the integration of gender equity awareness into university curricula and extracurricular activities, which could influence societal norms over time. While case examples are less prominent in the literature, both [3, 25] stress the importance of recognizing and amplifying successful female figures in Nigerian sport to inspire upcoming leaders.

Table 3: Existing Interventions

Main Theme	Subthemes	Summary of Contributions
Interventions and Emerging Strategies for Gender Equity in Nigerian Sport	Policy Alignment with Global Goals	Document national efforts to align sport policy with SDGs to promote inclusion and equity via structured mobilization.
	Mentorship for Women's Leadership [4, 3, 25]	Ofili positions mentorship as a cost-effective intervention for leadership development; both authors highlight the importance of

		amplifying role models to inspire future leaders.
	Gender Awareness in Education [29]	Advocates for embedding gender equity into university curricula and extracurriculars to shift societal norms and promote long-term change.
	Gender-Mainstreaming in Policy Development [16, 31]	Highlight ongoing national and institutional efforts to integrate gender considerations into sport-related policies.
	Need for Institutionalized Reform [25]	Warns that without clear implementation frameworks, gender equity policies will have limited practical impact.

Existing Interventions: In terms of policy, [16, 31] highlight ongoing efforts in gender-mainstreaming and inclusion-focused policy development. However, [25] argues that unless such reforms are institutionalized with clear implementation frameworks, their impact will remain minimal.

There are emerging efforts aimed at reshaping the gender dynamics in Nigerian sport management, though their scale and effectiveness remain varied. [4] highlight how aligning national sport frameworks with global objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides an entry point for gender-inclusive reforms. Their policy analysis underscores the importance of strategic mobilization through sport councils and ministries as a means to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making.

Mentorship has surfaced as a critical, low-cost, high-impact intervention. [3] demonstrates how mentoring programs have supported women's advancement in sports leadership roles across Nigeria. Drawing on case-based evidence, she argues that structured

mentoring is essential for nurturing confidence, leadership skills, and professional networks. This finding aligns with international scholarship, including [7] Ecological-Intersectional Model, which advocates for targeted support mechanisms that address gender, location, and socioeconomic status simultaneously.

Institutional interventions are also advancing slowly within the educational sector. [29] recommends integrating gender sensitivity training into university curricula and extracurricular programs to address biases from an early stage. These academic reforms have the potential to transform cultural perceptions over time by embedding equity-focused values in future sport professionals.

Despite limited documentation of individual case studies, both [3, 25] stress the symbolic and practical importance of highlighting the success stories of pioneering women in sport. These role models, when amplified, can serve as powerful tools to challenge stereotypes and inspire the next generation of female sport leaders.

Policy-focused interventions have also gained traction, though their implementation remains inconsistent. [16, 31] discuss gender-mainstreaming efforts within national sport policy frameworks, advocating for equity-based governance structures. However, [25] cautions that unless these reforms are institutionalized through enforceable mechanisms and routine audits, their long-term impact will be minimal. This concern is echoed in global literature, including the IOC Gender Equality Review Project [10], which emphasizes the need for accountability metrics to track progress.

In summary, while notable initiatives exist ranging from mentorship programs and academic reforms to gender mainstreaming in policy their fragmented and uneven application limits their transformative potential. For these interventions to be genuinely effective, they must be part of an integrated strategy that engages stakeholders across government, academia, civil society, and media. Only through sustained and multi-level efforts can the systemic barriers facing women in Nigerian sport management be effectively dismantled.

Strategic Recommendations and Future Pathways: A consensus emerges in the literature regarding future strategies. [3, 15] call for the establishment of structured mentorship programs and leadership pipelines designed specifically for women. For systemic transformation, [16, 4] advocate for gender-responsive policy reforms that not only address existing inequities but also introduce inclusion benchmarks and measurable outcomes.

To reinforce accountability, [25] recommends regular institutional audits and transparent reporting structures that track progress in gender equity. Education also features prominently as a transformative tool. [29, 31] argue that educational campaigns coupled with curriculum reforms can challenge harmful stereotypes and promote positive role models.

The media, often seen as part of the problem, is also presented as part of the solution. As [9] suggest, ethical journalism and inclusive storytelling can enhance the visibility of women in sport. Finally, achieving long-term change will require coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders. [27, 4] emphasize that partnerships between government, NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector are essential for sustainable progress.

Table 4: Strategic Recommendations and Future Pathways

Main Theme	Subthemes	Summary of Contributions
Strategic Recommendations and Future Pathways for Gender Equity in Sport	Structured Mentorship and Leadership Pipelines [3, 15]	Advocate for formal mentorship programs and development tracks tailored to support women's advancement in sport leadership.
	Gender-Responsive Policy Reform [16, 4]	Call for policy reforms that include measurable inclusion benchmarks to address and monitor gender disparities systemically.

	Institutional Accountability and Transparency [25]	Recommends periodic audits and clear reporting systems to track gender equity initiatives and ensure enforcement.
	Educational Reform and Stereotype Reduction [29, 31]	Stress the importance of education and awareness campaigns in challenging stereotypes and promoting female role models in sport.
	Ethical Media Representation [9]	Argue for inclusive storytelling and responsible journalism to improve public perceptions and visibility of women athletes.
	Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration [27, 4]	Emphasize the need for strategic partnerships among government, NGOs, academia, and the private sector to ensure coordinated, lasting progress.

A consensus emerges in the literature regarding future strategies. [3, 15] call for the establishment of structured mentorship programs and leadership pipelines designed specifically for women. For systemic transformation, [4, 16] advocate for gender-responsive policy reforms that not only address existing inequities but also introduce inclusion benchmarks and measurable outcomes.

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A growing consensus in the literature highlights the urgent need for structured, evidence-informed strategies to advance women's participation and leadership in Nigerian sport management. [3, 15] emphasize the transformative potential of mentorship programs and leadership development pipelines tailored specifically to women's experiences. These programs not only build confidence and skills but also create sustainable networks that support long-term career progression in a male-dominated field.

Policy reforms are equally crucial for systemic change. [16, 4] advocate for gender-responsive policies that establish inclusion benchmarks, set measurable equity targets, and institutionalize gender audits. These reforms are not merely aspirational but are essential in addressing structural inequalities embedded within Nigerian sport organizations. Drawing from global models, including [1] on gender quotas and [34] on sport policy, it becomes evident that policy without implementation is ineffective.

[25] reinforces this by recommending the adoption of transparent reporting mechanisms and regular institutional audits. These practices are supported by international standards, such as those outlined in the IOC Gender Equality Review Project [10] and the Beijing Declaration [11], which stress accountability as a core pillar of reform.

Education emerges as a powerful lever for change. [29, 31] argue that rethinking school and university curricula to include gender equity components can challenge deep-rooted stereotypes. These interventions, especially when embedded in teacher training and sport administration programs, help shape the perspectives of future decision-makers and role models.

The media is also repositioned from a site of bias to a platform for advocacy. [9] suggest that inclusive media practices such as equitable coverage of women's sports, profiling of female leaders, and use of non-sexist language can dramatically enhance the visibility and legitimacy of women in sport. [19] further argue that representation influences public perception, corporate sponsorship, and policy attention.

Finally, sustainable progress depends on cross-sector collaboration. [4, 27] highlight the importance of partnerships involving government agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, private sector stakeholders, and local communities. These partnerships can drive innovations in funding, advocacy, research, and program implementation.

Advancing women's leadership in Nigerian sport requires a multi-pronged strategy: robust mentorship, gender-sensitive policy reforms, education-driven attitude shifts, inclusive media advocacy, and multi-stakeholder engagement. These elements must function synergistically to dismantle systemic barriers and create a more inclusive and equitable sport management landscape in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the persistent gender disparities in Nigerian sport management, identifying key challenges, existing interventions, and pathways for the future. The findings reveal that women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and participation, due largely to entrenched socio-cultural norms, inadequate institutional support, and limited access to funding and mentorship. While some interventions such as mentorship programs, university reforms, and gender-sensitive policy frameworks are in place, their fragmented and inconsistent implementation limits their overall impact.

A consistent theme across the literature is the urgent need for systemic and sustained action. Achieving gender equity in Nigerian sport management will require coordinated reforms across education, policy, media, and institutional practices. This includes not only creating inclusive opportunities but also

ensuring mechanisms for monitoring and accountability are firmly in place.

Future research should deepen understanding of intersectional barriers affecting rural women, women with disabilities, and those from marginalized communities. More case studies and data-driven evaluations of existing programs are also necessary to guide evidence-based policymaking. Crucially, collaboration between government agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector stakeholders will be vital in advancing women's leadership and participation in Nigerian sport.

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