

The Challenges of Women Sports Leaders in Morocco 'Theoretical Approach'

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Abstract

Today, almost everywhere in the world, gender equality in sport, and in particular in high-level positions of responsibility in sport, remains very low despite the promotion by international and national institutions of the participation of women in decision-making positions in sport. This article aims at questioning the practices of human resources management in the context of Moroccan Sports Organizations. To do so, we attempt in this article to highlight the factors that hinder the advancement of women in Moroccan sports organizations. Our article brings a certain originality to this research given the limited number of studies in this field. Thus, this work complements existing studies on the managerial practices of sports organizations. However, it is limited by the methodology used and requires further research in this area.

Keywords

Women, Equality, Gender, Sports Organization.

1. Introduction

Since the first International Conferences of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS) in the 1970s and 1980s, officials have emphasized the need to strengthen the presence of women in positions of responsibility in sport. (UNESCO, *Conférence générale Vingt-cinquième session*, Paris 1989, France, 1989)

Despite these initiatives and commitments in terms of gender equality in decision-making positions, women still face difficulties in accessing decision-making positions in the national and international sport context. They do not have the same opportunities as men to occupy positions of responsibility in the field of sport. Indeed, the International Olympic Committees (IOC's) report on gender equality and inclusion in 2021 confirmed this problem.

In 2020, only three international sports federations had women presidents (Triathlon Federation, Golf Federation and Curling Federation), nine out of thirty-three international federations had women Secretaries General, and only eight international federations had exceeded the minimum 30% representation of women on their boards. At the level of National Olympic Committees (NOCs), the results for 2020 show that women hold 8% of NOC President positions and 16% of Secretary General positions. Indeed, of the one hundred one NOCs that provided data regarding their board of directors in the 2019 NOC review, only twenty-seven National Olympic Committees exceeded the minimum target of 30% female representation on their board of directors.

Currently, at the national level, of the fifty-three sports federations in Morocco, only four are chaired by women. These are the Royal Moroccan Federation of Aerobics, Fitness, Hip Hop and Related Sports, the Royal Moroccan Federation of Volleyball, the Royal Moroccan Federation of Sport for All and the Royal Federation of Bridge.

In 2008, there were only three women presidents out of forty-four federations. It is therefore encouraging to see a slight increase in the representation of women in sport in leadership positions in Morocco.

However, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender parity in this area. (*Etude sur le Sport, le Genre et le Développement en Afrique*, 2021)

Therefore, it is now essential to review the factors that hinder the advancement of women in sports organizations.

1.1 Objectives

The objective of this study is to identify the barriers that prevent women from advancing to leadership positions in Moroccan sports organizations and to develop solutions to address them. The study will utilize a theoretical framework based on existing literature to gain a deeper understanding of relevant concepts and theories, and to explain the factors that hinder women's progress in reaching decision-making roles within these organizations.

2. Theoretical foundations

The first part of our work focuses on the definition of the different key concepts related to our problem, in order to avoid any ambiguity.

2.1 Definition of key concepts: Equality; Parity; Mixed; Diversity; Equity; Gender, Women, Sport Organization

Equality between women and men implies equal rights for women and men, girls and boys, and equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation in all spheres of public and private life. It also implies the equality of women and men in access to and distribution of resources. (*Conseil de l'Europe- Stratégie du Conseil de l'Europe pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2018-2023*, 2018)

In 2019, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) defined parity as the fact that each gender is equally represented in institutions. This tool is a key element in guaranteeing equality between women and men and allowing women to have access to the same opportunities and rights, while taking into account their specificities. Parity is considered the fundamental principle of policies to combat gender inequality. To achieve this objective, several laws have been adopted to reduce the gaps in the areas of wages, employment, of education and representation of women in political and economic power. (*Insee., Definition - Parity and equality between women and men*, 2019) . About mixity , it is a concept that appeared in the dictionary in 1963 and refers to the introduction of a gender representation where it was not previously present. Most recently, The Robert Dictionary (2022) has defined mixedness as the "character of what is mixed," meaning a set formed by several elements of a different nature. In this article, we are interested in gender mixing in sports organizations. The definition we are interested in is that of Zaidman (2007), who defines co-education as the progress of legal equality between the sexes, characteristic of democratic societies. It leads to new situations and ideologies regarding the coexistence of women and men in a common social space. (*Gouvernement of Canada., Guide on Equity-Diversity and Inclusion Terminology-Glossaries and vocabularies*, 2021)

Diversity is a concept of Anglo-Saxon origin that designates the variety of profiles within a group, an organization or a society. It implies respect for the individual identities of different members of the organization, including dimensions such as origin, race, gender expression, sex, age, physical appearance, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, etc. (*Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology*, 2021)

Equity is " a principle that recognizes the unique experiences and circumstances of individuals and ensures that they have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to achieve just outcomes". (*Gouvernement of Canada., Guide on Equity-Diversity and Inclusion Terminology-Glossaries and vocabularies*, 2021)

This means that mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that people's identities are treated fairly and that any type of discrimination or inequality based on a person's identity must be ignored. In other words, it is essential to ensure and guarantee equal opportunities.

Gender" refers to the roles, behaviors, expressions and identities that society constructs for men, women, girls, boys and people of different sexes and genders. Gender affects how people perceive themselves and others, how they act and interact, and how power and resources are distributed in society. Individuals and groups understand, experience, and express gender in a wide variety of ways, through the roles they adopt, expectations of themselves, relationships with others, and the complex ways that gender is institutionalized in society". This means that gender is a socio-cultural construct imposed on people by the society to which they belong. (*Gouvernement of Canada., Guide on Equity-Diversity and Inclusion Terminology-Glossaries and vocabularies*, 2021)

In this sense Gender Equality is " Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys." (UN Women)¹

While Gender Equity is " the process of being fair to men and women. To ensure equity, measures often need to be put in place to compensate for historical and social imbalances that prevent women and men from being equal. Equity is a means. Equality is an outcome." (UNESCO)²

Gender balance is " the equal participation and representation of women and men in all areas of work, projects, programs or communication". (EIGE)³

The concept of woman is central to this article and refers to female gender identity, specifically an adult person who identifies as female. This definition is based on the one proposed by renowned organizations such as UN Women and WHO. Indeed, we use the term "woman" to refer to a gender identity throughout our work presented in this article.

According to PICHULT.F.(1995), the sports organization can be defined as a system of collective action directed towards the sports field, aiming to clarify the most effective modes of cooperation between its members. It is composed of actors pursuing their own objectives, which leads to a multitude of power games between them. The organization must also interact with a given environment, which can sometimes be conflictual, and is characterized by the pursuit of common goals.

2.2The GOS approach (Gendre - Organisation - System)

The concept of the glass ceiling was first introduced in the American literature in the late 1970s by Morrison et al (1987) in their book "Breaking the glass ceiling". It is defined as "a set of artificial barriers, created by behavioral or organizational biases, that prevent qualified individuals from advancing in their organization. This metaphor of the "glass ceiling" was then introduced into the French literature by Laufer (2004) and has been particularly successful. According to Belghiti and Kartochian (2008), the glass ceiling: "At equivalent levels of education, women still do not obtain the same career opportunities as men - whether in terms of promotion, positions, responsibilities or even salaries. As a result, women remain underrepresented in management positions."(Kande, 2014.)

To understand the concept of the glass ceiling, several theories and approaches have been developed, including the gender approach, the organization approach, and the Gender-Organization-System (GOS) approach. In our research, we are primarily interested in the GOS theory, which was developed by Fagenson in 1990 and revived by Belghiti-Mahut in 2004. However, we will also look at the gender and organizational structure approaches, as the GOS approach is also based on the latter two approaches.

The GOS approach aims to explain the nature of the barriers faced by women in accessing decision-making positions and to understand the determinants of the construction of the glass ceiling.(NAJI, 2014)

It suggests that women's advancement is limited in organizations, not only because of individual factors related to gender and factors related to the organizational context, but also because of factors related to the socio-cultural and institutional system in which women operate. In other words, the GOS theory combines the gender approach focusing on the individual and the organizational approach focusing on the organizational structures. According to Henning and Jardim (1977), the gender approach: "states that the perceived attributes of individuals vary independently of their sex".

This means that biological origins or social influences have a strong influence on an individual's personality and skills. According to Putnam and Heinen (1976) and Schein (1973), characteristics such as power, reason, competitiveness, strength and independence are considered masculine traits. Similarly, proponents of this gender approach consider characteristics such as warmth, kindness, altruism, low self-esteem, and motivation to be female traits. They also argue that women are conditioned from an early age to develop these characteristics.(Kande, 2014)

From this approach, it is inferred that women are responsible for limiting their career progression and advancement. Kanter (1977) developed the organization-centered approach, in which she states that "male characteristics perceived to be associated with men and female characteristics perceived to be associated with women are assumed to be related to their organizational level, not their gender."(Kande, 2014)

1UN Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

2UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

3 EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

According to Kanter, high-level positions are assigned to individuals with different characteristics than positions at the bottom of the corporate hierarchy. This is because high-level positions require characteristics such as (power, strength, assertiveness, and independence), which are often perceived as masculine, while positions at the bottom of the hierarchy require characteristics such as (kindness, warmth, gentleness, understanding, awareness of others' feelings, and helpfulness to others), which are often perceived as feminine.

For the GOS approach, Fagenson (1993) states that it is important to consider the organizational context, as this is much broader than the organizational structure itself. This organizational context encompasses several aspects such as society, culture, history, ideology and politics. This factor has not been taken into account in previous approaches, such as the gender approach and the organizational structure approach.

In addition, this factor may influence women's ability to advance and obtain positions at the highest levels of the organization. In another way, organizational structures are part of the socio-cultural system in which women evolve "social inequalities are reproduced or constituted and reconstituted" (Martin et al., 1983, p. 20)(MAGHNI,AMINE, 2018)

Finally, the GOS approach can be summarized by the figure below, developed (Kande, 2014), which takes into consideration Fagenson's three factors:

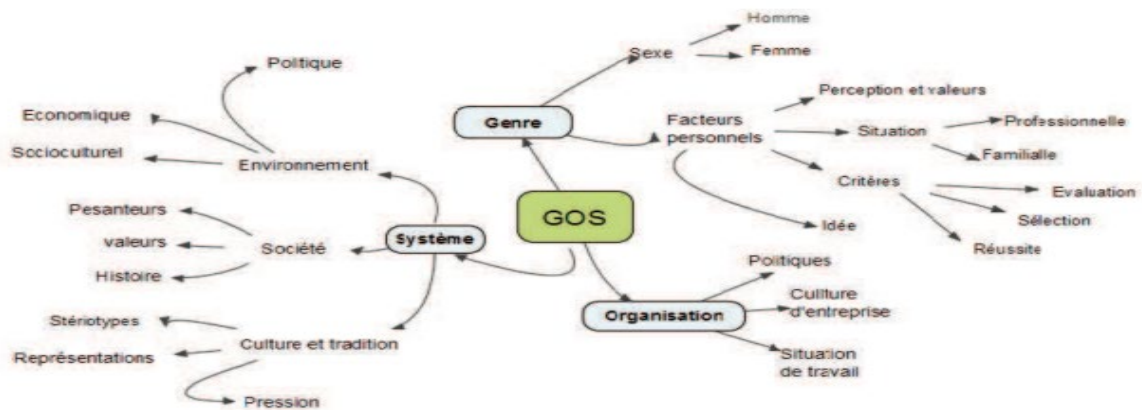


Figure 1. GOS Model

The Figure 1 shows that the GOS approach considers the interaction between three factors: gender, organization, and system. Gender refers to the social and cultural differences between the sexes, organization refers to the structure and culture of the organization, and system refers to the broader aspects of the society and culture in which the organization operates. The combination of these three factors can create barriers for women in their career progression and ability to reach senior positions. By examining these factors in their interaction, the GOS approach aims to identify the measures needed to break the glass ceiling and promote gender equality in the organization.

3. Human resource management in national and international sports bodies

In this section, we will proceed according to the following plan:

On the one hand, we will review the milestones for women in sport;

On the other hand, we highlight Moroccan women in national and international sports bodies.

3.1 Steps for women in sport⁴

Since the first international conferences of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS) in the 1970s and 1980s, officials have emphasized the need to strengthen the presence of women in positions of responsibility in sport. (UNESCO, *Conférence générale Vingt-cinquième session*, 1989)

The following Table 1 shows the different milestones for women in sport:

Table 1. Steps for women in sport between 1970 and 2021

Years	Steps	
1970	1976	Creation of the International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS)
	1979	Inclusion of sport in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
1980	1981	Cooptation of the first two women IOC members
	1990	Flor Isava Fonseca becomes the first woman elected to the IOC Executive Board
	1991	Introduction of conditions that require new sports to be played by both men and women to be included in the Summer Olympic Games
	1991	Integration of non-discrimination based on gender in the charter
	1994	Brighton Declaration
	1995	The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action includes for the first time a specific reference to sport as a tool for promoting gender equality and empowering women
	1995	Creation of the IOC Women and Sport Working Group
	1996	The promotion of women becomes an IOC mission
	1996	The IOC has set a goal of having 10% of decision-making positions held by women by 2000 and 20% by 2005
	1997	Anita DeFrantz becomes the first woman IOC Vice-President
2000	2000	Millennium Development Goals Established Goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women
	2004	Evolution of IOC Women & Sport Working Group into official IOC commission
2010	2010	Creation of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
	2013	The number of women IOC members and the number of IOC positions held by women passes 20%
	2014	Number of women IOC commission chairs passes 20%
	2014	IOC signs Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration
	2015	Release of Olympic Agenda 2020
	2016	Number of IOC commission positions held by women passes 30%
	2016	Sustainable Development Goals Established Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
	2016	IOC EB approved a minimum target of 30% for women's representation in Olympic Movement governing bodies by 2020
	2017	Kazan action plan created
	2018	IOC Gender Equality Review Project published
2018	Number of IOC commission positions held by women passes 30%	

⁴ Gender equality & inclusion report 2021

	2018	Number of women IOC members passes 30%
	2019	Number of women IOC commission chairs passes 30%
2020	2020	Number of women IOC Executive Board members passes 30%
	2020	IOC joins UN Women's Sport for Generation Equality Initiative
	2021	Release of Olympic Agenda 2020+5 and IOC Gender Equality & Inclusion objectives for 2021-2024
	2021	Generation Equality Forum convened by UN Women

Despite the efforts made by different international organizations to encourage and support women's participation and equality between women and men in different aspects of sport and physical activity, women are still far from being in an equal situation with men.

3.2 Moroccan women in national and international sports bodies

In this section, we highlight women leaders in Moroccan sport who have left their mark on the history of sport. This includes not only their accomplishments as athletes and their outstanding performances at the national and international level, but also their role as managers and decision makers in national and international sports organizations.

Here is a Table 2 presenting some of the Moroccan women holding leadership positions in national and international public sports bodies:

Table 2. Moroccan women sports leaders and their functions

Moroccan Women Sports Leaders	Functions
Nawal EL MOUTAWAKEL	The Moroccan Olympic champion won the first gold medal in the first women's 400m hurdles in the history of the Olympic Games. She has also held several positions in Arab, African, regional and international sports bodies. Currently, she is a member of the Executive Board and Vice President of the International Olympic Committee, as well as President of the Women and Sport Commission within the CNOM.(IOC, s. d.)
Nezha BIDOUANE	The former double world champion in the 400m hurdles has held several positions in Arab, African, regional and international sports bodies. She is currently vice-president of the Mohammed VI Foundation of Sports Champions and president of the Royal Moroccan Federation of Sport for All.(wib ad, 2022)
BOUCHRA HAJIJ	The ex-Moroccan volleyball player is currently the head of the African Volleyball Confederation. In addition, the president of the Royal Moroccan Volleyball Federation was recently appointed vice-president of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) for the period 2021-2024.(diplomatie, 2022)
Selma BENNANI	A professional in the field of aerobics and she continued her studies in this field in the United States. She is the first female founder and president of the Royal Moroccan Federation of Aerobics, Fitness, Hip Hop and related disciplines and currently holds the position of the first Moroccan female international aerobics judge.(<i>Rencontre avec Selma Bennani fondatrice et présidente de la Fédération royale marocaine des sports aérobic et fitness,2022</i>)
Chafika TAK TAK	Vice President of the Confederation and Honorary President of the Royal Moroccan Bridge
Samira BENNANI	The first Moroccan woman to become involved in motorsport also made history as the first African to join the "Women in Motorsport" commission of the International Automobile Federation (FIA). She currently holds the position of Vice President of the Royal Moroccan Federation of Motor Sports and is also a member of the FIA World Council.(<i>Samira BENNANI,2001</i>)

Based on this table, it is evident that Moroccan women have held significant decision-making positions in both national and international sports bodies, thus contributing to the development of sports at both levels.

This demonstrates the competence and potential of women to create added value in their respective spheres of work. Therefore, it is crucial to provide them with opportunities and confidence to showcase their skills and value to the world.

4. Application of GOS Theory to Moroccan Women Sport Leaders

In this section, we attempt to apply GOS theory to the context of sports organizations. Our goal is to identify the barriers that prevent women from reaching decision-making positions. We draw on secondary data, such as articles, theses, and reports, to identify our problem.

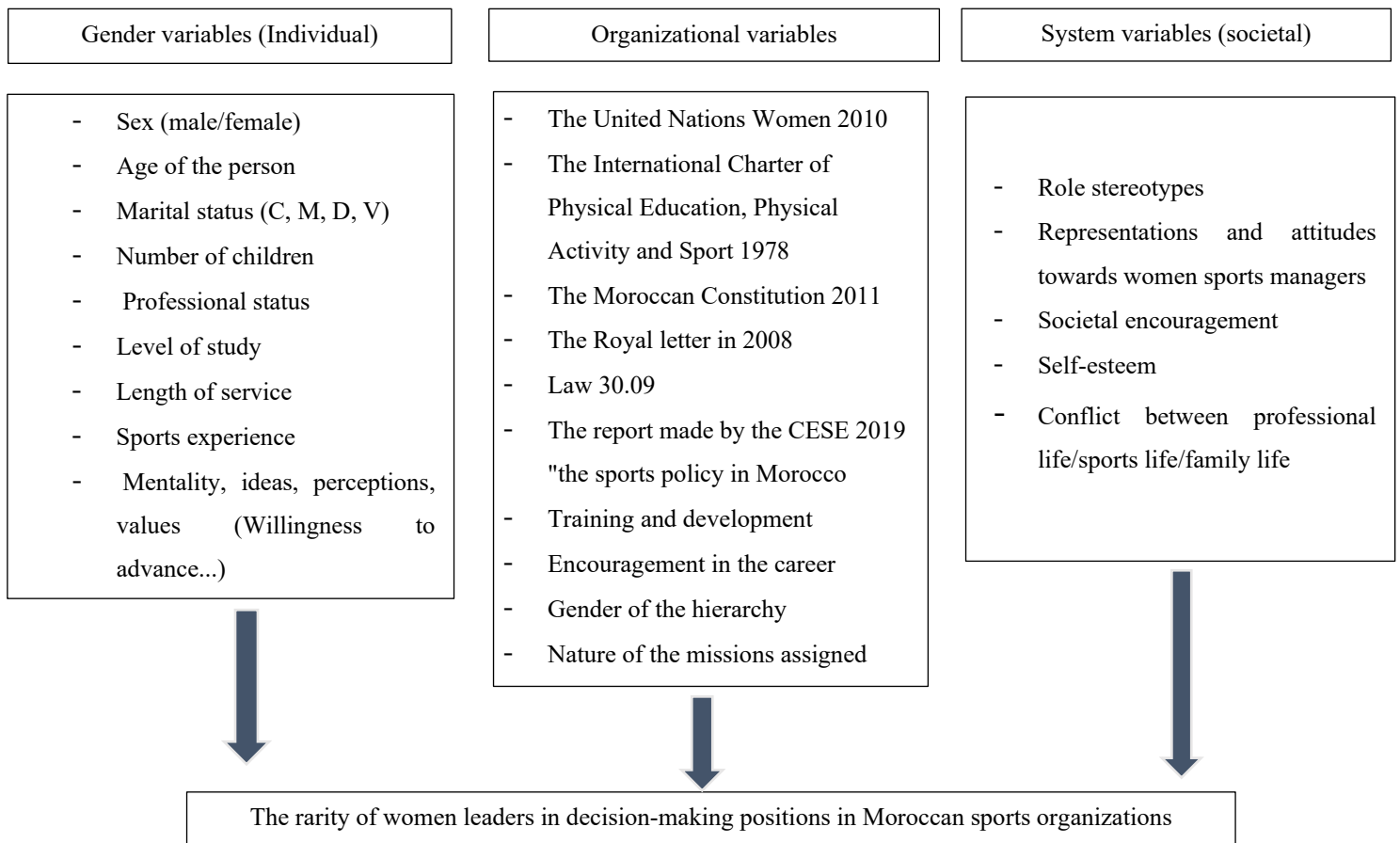


Figure 2. GOS Model in Moroccan Sport Context, by our writers

The Figure 2 illustrates the Gender-Organization-System (GOS) approach applied in the sport context. This approach is based on three factors developed by Argenson, which are interdependent and promote the consideration of gender in organizations.

The literature review identified several key elements related to these three factors, which have an impact on the presence of women in decision-making positions in sports organizations. Indeed, women face different factors that interact with each other.

The factors presented in the figure have an impact on the scarcity of women in decision-making positions in sports organizations.

In addition, the Gender-Organization-System (GOS) approach allows us to better understand the interactions between these three factors and their impact on the under-representation of women in management and decision-making positions, and to propose concrete actions to promote gender equality in the governance of sports organizations.

5. Actions to address gender stereotypes hindering women's access and representation in decision-making positions in sports organizations

In this section, we present some actions that should be integrated into national and international policies to encourage women to choose and access decision-making positions in sports organizations.

First, we focus on the 2021 IOC report on gender equality and inclusion;

In the second part, we discuss the report on sports policy in Morocco.

5.1 International level

Several international sports organizations have committed themselves to promoting the presence of women in decision-making positions. They have developed roadmaps to support and encourage women to take part in the decision-making bodies of the international sport movement.

In this section, we will present some recommendations and commitments from the IOC's report on gender equality and inclusion 2021.

- By 2024, the IOC is committed to supporting all initiatives aimed at catalyzing a significant representation of women in the governance and decision-making bodies of the Olympic movement;
- The IOC will develop strategies to broaden the scope of talented women candidates for governance positions in general, and for Executive Board positions in particular, in order to encourage them to apply;
- Stakeholders in the Olympic Movement will review their election procedures to identify strategies for gender balance in their governance bodies.
- The various stakeholders of the Olympic Movement will establish reviews of the election procedures with the objective of determining strategies for equal access to decision-making positions.
- The IOC aims to ensure equal access to decision-making positions, whether political, economic or public, and to ensure real and effective participation of women, rather than symbolic, in the various functions assigned to them.

5.2 National level

At the national level, several Moroccan organizations have addressed the issue of gender equality in decision-making positions in national sports organizations. In this section, we will present some of the recommendations mentioned in the report on sports policy in Morocco, prepared in 2019 by the Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

- The transformation of the National Sport Strategy into an operational public policy enshrined in a framework law taking into account the provisions of the Constitution in terms of integration and respect for equality between men and women;
- The improvement of governance at the level of sports federations, regional leagues and sports associations;
- Encouraging sports federations to ensure equitable access of women to positions of responsibility within the governing body of the sports movement by applying representative quotas;
- A redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of sport actors to be supported: the obligation of female representation for each discipline.

It can be deduced that if these actions are carried out by 2024, women will be present in the decision-making positions of national and international sports organizations. This will add value to these organizations and have an impact on their performance.

6. Conclusion

Finally, more than four decades after the first initiatives in favor of gender equality in sports on the one hand and access to decision-making positions in sports organizations on the other, it is regrettable to note that Moroccan women have still not reached the same level of equal opportunities as men in the field of sports.

This means that even today, there are factors that prevent Moroccan women from demonstrating their skills and added value in the field of sports, and particularly within the decision-making spheres of sports organizations.

In conclusion, our theoretical study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by women in the decision-making spheres of sports organizations in Morocco. Based on the GOS theory, we find that women face barriers that prevent them from advancing up the hierarchy and reaching decision-making positions in sports. These barriers are the result of several factors combined at different levels: individual, organizational, and societal.

However, this study has a limitation regarding the methodology used to study the situation of women in Moroccan sports organizations. In order to better understand the barriers to women's access to decision-making positions in these organizations, more in-depth field studies are needed for a more complete analysis.

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